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Theatre Australia



The New
Australian
Cabaret Scene
— from Cult to
Contagion.

The Opera
Report — has it
said enough?

Freddy
Gibson's
plans for the
Theatre Royal

Alan
Ayckbourn's
latest — review
from London

Alan Cassell in
interview

Sydney Film
Festival

**Cyrano de
Bergerac**



SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
PREMIERE SEASON 1980



THE SUNNY SOUTH SIDE JAN.
CLOSE OF PLAY MAY FEB-MARCH
NO NAMES, NO BACK DRAFT APRIL-MAY
IN GETTING MY ACT TOGETHER APRIL-MAY
NOT TAKING IT ON THE ROAD APRIL-MAY
CYRANO DE BERGERAC APRIL-MAY
MERRY WIVES OF WINCHESTER APRIL-MAY
THE PRECIOUS WOMAN APRIL-MAY



Theatre Australia

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OPENS 31 JULY

Backyard

BY JANIS BALODIS



director Terence Clarke . designer Stephen Curtis :
David Atkins . Bryan Brown . Michele Fawdon
Julie McGregor . David Slingsby . Joan Sydney

COMMENT

New wave popular theatre

The "straight" theatre has varied in its ability to attract a mass audience. It managed general appeal in Greek and Medieval times by being linked to the religious beliefs of the period. When it lost that religious involvement it became an illegitimate activity, only recently recovering its status as "high" culture.

Even in Elizabethan times, although the populace went to Shakespeare's theatre, the actors needed the patronage of a noble to avoid being liable to arrest as vagabonds, and the theatre buildings were tucked away on the south side of the Thames.

In the nineteenth century, again mass appeal was achieved with blood and the older method remains where *Good Times* triumphed. But Mrs. Worthington was warned not to put her daughter on the stage.

There have always been entertainers around the fringe of dramatic theatre. The clowns and jugglers of ancient times became the jesters, minstrels and animal trainers of the Middle Ages and beyond. In the early nineteenth century the circus provided an umbrella for such acts. But they also reached the theatres in *variety* entertainments. Between the acts of a varied dramatic bill, often lasting an overall five hours, in the musical shows, burlesques and finally vaudeville.

Where straight drama had a stronger hold on the theatre, the cultural movement began in the boulevard theatres of Paris and later in the Kabarett of Berlin, Munich and Vienna. In spite of socio-economic turmoil its content was avant garde, satire and politically motivated.

In Australia variety performers found outlets on the vaudeville circuits of Harry Richards and Ben Fuller, and in the gay shows of Sophie Barjon, Leveaux and others, cross-dressing the nightclub taking theatre to the beach, country and suburbs. The tents had turned from melodrama to vaudeville in the twenties to survive the coming of the picture show men, but they could not fight the competition of the clubs. The final tent show was given at Chateaux in 1961.

The club circuit persists, still providing a platform for many of the acts in sequence and razzed, which once played the vaudeville theatres.

But there is rougher, more gaudy, more aggressively indigenous, new wave of popular theatre closer to the French, German and Austrian cultures, which may

become a total force in the theatre of the future. It began in the Flying Troupez Club in 1974 when John Pinder gave a series to many of the more boisterous acts which couldn't get a look-in elsewhere. Such performers as Sam Angelica and the Busby Berkeley, with singer Pancha La Cruz, soon had cult followings, then reached more general audiences with Pinder's transfer to the larger Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant and Zoo around the corner.

The Trip continued and widened its appeal. Fashions grew up, following its comedy acts, only to burn down two years ago, but the respectable fare it offered overlaid in Pinder's Comedy Cafe, managed by its major performer Rod Quastok.

No such has the form burgeoned that Pinder now counts the "alternative" tag and claims that what might once have been that way is now mainstream.

In Sydney at least in the areas around Taylor Square and various pubs, have seen a similar movement. The shows there are comic, dance, musical and mixed up comedy, many related to the gay scene. *Chateau Conspiracy* (see 7th January, 1983) has become a staple management in the field with such groups as *Subliminal* heavily influenced by Rodney Kemp.

Some of the acts had previously only found the streets as an outlet, or satirical attention, now, given cohesion, good management and greater public awareness of their audience they could find a new popular arena to thrive. A gang, vulgar, colourful, vulgar, brash, engaging and gaudy, raucous entertainment is long, was, damn largely conservative, reactionary and stifled short image of much present day straight theatre.

Ralph Kerle, the present manager of the Flying Troupez, introduces readers to this movement in this, the first issue of *Vanguard*.



Robert Page, Editor

Theatre Australia

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General Advertising: The Globe Bridge Company (02) 92 2249

Entertainment Advertising: Peter McDonald (02) 26 1010

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I N F O

THEY'RE PLAYING OUR

SONG... On the 23rd of this month, a new musical opens at Sydney's Theatre Royal, starring Jackie Weaver and John Waters. Written by Neil Simon, the credibility of the story comes from the real life scenario of Oscar winning composer Marvin Hamlisch and singer/actor/inger Carol Bayer Sager. The two first collaborated on "Nobody Does It Better", the theme from *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

Jackie Weaver is one of the best known and most experienced musical actresses in the country. She started with *Cinderella* (1962) at the Philip Theatre, but she's also been prolific in straight theatre, film, television and stage shows on radio and TV. This year she'll also be appearing in two major television series: *Paul in Marriage* for the ABC and *Water Under The Bridge* for the Ten Network.

John Waters also started off in musicals, coming to Sydney as the lead in *Man*, and he too has found numerous outlets in every kind of entertainment medium, including hosting the TV production *The Prophet of Amsterdam*.

New Yorker Philip Canuck is to direct the show and Dale Ringland (lastly with *Star 80 Party*) will be musical director. Song's producers are Australian Guarnato and David Frost.



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BIGGEST TOUR SO FAR...

The Victorian State Opera's new production of *Regenera* will be touring Victorian country towns and Tasmania starting next month and not returning until November. It will be the biggest tour ever to visit Victorian country centres, with over seventy singers, musicians and technicians from the State Opera Company. By the time it ends, the company will have clocked up 1500 kms of travel.

Regenera will be harrowed

John Wood's 73th role, as against Rosemary Boyle who will be singing Gilda at the age of twenty-four.

The VSO's schools tour programme, *Pink Finks* (opera is completely sold out for second and third years and will be seen by some 18,000 children in over sixty different schools). The opera is performed in classrooms and involves colourful sets and costumes, student participation and educational and social themes.

FOURTH YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS WEEKEND

Shopfront Theatre, with funding from the Literature Board of the Australia Council, is offering young playwrights from all over Australia the opportunity to work intensively on their craft with professional writers, directors and actors for three and a half days from August 28 to 31. Young writers between the ages of 16 and 18 years are invited to submit scripts for TV, film, radio, puppetry, any drama medium and to apply for inclusion on the weekend.

Professional writers who have attended previous Weekends include Alex Barro, Steve Spence, Margaret Kelly-John, Dingwall, Jill Marris, Michael Carr, Peter Kenna and Jon McNeil. The Weekend will be supervised by Shopfront



Young Playwrights at last year's Weekend

staff and the Artistic Director will be Errol Bray, whose play *The Choir* was part of the National Playwrights' Conference this year.

The Weekend will open with

a session of plays by young Australian writers which have been submitted to previous Weekends. The Weekend will be free to young writers and help will be available with fares

to Sydney where needed.

Enquiries should be made to Shopfront Theatre for Young People, 88 Carlton Parade, Carlton NSW 3218. Phone Sydney 558 1948.



Val Telford as *Plastic* and Arthur Harrison as *Blaise* in *Accidentally Yours*

THREE HEALTHY PIECES

...MAGPIE, the State Theatre Company of SA's theatre in education team, have begun all a month with three new shows. Following concerns expressed by the National Safety Council, Health Education Department, Department of Community Welfare, Family Planning Association, teachers and a number of related organisations the topics of home safety, sexuality and food are covered in their "Three Healthy Pieces."

Accidentally Yours, for primary school children, looks at the physical characters *Blaise* and *Plastic* who contend with the wicked tricks of *Tanky Neck*. The children see accidents that happen in every home and help discover ways to avoid them.

Don't Be Sick, for four to five secondary students, explores adolescent sexuality and its dilemmas. If there is a message in this play it is "Don't if you don't want to. If you do, be prepared."

Take-away Food is Toxic in *There's Affairs The Gift* for upper secondary students. It is MAGPIE's first piece of music theatre in education and asks why do we eat the food that we do?

I N F O

HELP FROM PLAY-BRIGHTS PLEASE

Queensland University has a healthy and long-standing involvement in Australian drama. Queensland University Press is second only to Currency in the number of Australian plays it publishes. The University's Fraser Library has been collecting manuscripts of Australian plays for a number of years and now has

close to 1,400 scripts.

In the most recent drama project, eight of the University's English and Drama lecturers, with Alan Lawson and Alrene Sykes as general editors, are compiling a bibliography of Australian drama, which is being awarded post-graduate. (The information will eventually be available throughout Australia.) This movie drama bibliography is

will be "dash" of performance and publication but will also give a very brief plot outline and some keywords to convey basic themes of the play.

The bibliography is growing fast and Alan Lawson and Alrene Sykes are asking for help from Australian playwrights. Copies of scripts, in both form or given are requested, and details of any productions of plays, and

reviews thereof.

Too many plays just disappear for ever after a few performances. If you are willing to help give as many scripts as possible a more permanent place in libraries and perhaps later productions, write to Alrene Sykes, English Department, University of Qld, St Lucia, Qld 4067.

THEATRE FOR WOLLONGONG... Up to now Wollongong could hardly be said to have been on the theatrical map. It might be claimed that it was respectable for sporting Ashby Jack and Norman Gunston but apart from these contributions to Oz culture and national identity it's probably best known for coalmine stockpiles and its ethnic exploitation.

But in early July its most ambitious theatrical venture was undertaken with the launching of Theatre South. The city's first and most serious professional theatre company. It is under the artistic direction of Des Davis, recently returned from Canada, where he was founder and artistic director of the Carousel Theatre Company of St Catharines in Ontario, as well as Associate Professor of Theatre Studies at Brock University.

For the inaugural season of Theatre South he has assembled a core group of six professional actors, headed by John Clayton and John Warlock. Local amateurs will also be used.

In this pilot season the company presents two plays. *The Cox Man* an adaptation (by Maureen Healy) of *Mohawks*. Translated to a local setting and theme, and *Short-Goodness*, a children's programme written by Faye Montgomery which tours centres in the region as well as having a week's season in the Seymour Centre.

John Montgomery and John Clayton in *The Cox Man*.





The Famous Child Co.

NEW ADELAIDE COMPANY... Latest on the professional theatre scene in Adelaide is The Acting Company, a community theatre group which is seeking particularly to service young people. Under the directorship of Van Rader, the seven person company works to rediscover the dynamics of drama, relying not on elaborate stage effects, but on the energies and inventiveness of live performers.

The Acting Company is an offshoot from the University of Adelaide Theatre Guild which has had a thriving and adventurous amateur Ensemble since 1976. The Ensemble continues alongside The Acting Company.

The Guild contributes secretarial and administrative assistance, while Acting Company members themselves act, research, write, build sets, props and make costumes. They are based at Uleyly (a southern suburb) in The Old

Town Hall Theatre newly rescued from falling into private theatre by the Uleyly City Council as part of their Civic and Community Center. In this flexible venue, the Company is fast developing its own style of economical no-fuss theatre.

It opened in March this year with *The City of Dreadful Night*, an interesting look at early Uleyly. This was followed by a dramatized programme of war poems, *Sand, Sand, Sand*. July was an adaptation of Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* as a ninety-minute version for an actors' company, taking to heart Brecht's statement that "one good actor is worth a battalion of extras".

Plans for the rest of the year include *Macbeth* Hand-Shop, a country tour and an original adaptation of *Ye Gown and the Green Aught*. Some funding has been received from the State Government. Members work on a share-profit basis surviving on showings and righted sales.

THE COMEDIE-FRANCAISE, this year celebrates its three-hundredth anniversary, as the oldest subsidised theatre in the world. Established by royal decree of Louis XIV it had an illustrious career during the eighteenth century but suffered badly under the shaking policies of the Revolution. It was reorganised by Napoleon in 1812 (in the middle of his siege of Moscow!), and has been modified with in some way by every regime since then.

Originally conceived as a treasury and museum of French theatre it has gradually broadened its repertoire since the 1920s to the point where it now regularly presents the classics of European, as well as French theatre.

Most of the great figures in French theatre have naturally been associated with the Comedie during its long history and recently it has even welcomed leading foreign directors for guest productions.

In Sydney, the three-hundredth birthday of the Comedie-Francaise will be celebrated on August 25 by a Special Gala Performance of the Sydney Theatre Company's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (one of the Comedie's greatest hits). On the same date, a special commemorative exhibition, devised and presented by the Schools of Drama and French, will open at the Royal Holloway University of N/W. The exhibition is free and will run until September 6.



PERFORMING ARTS STAMPS... Marguerite McNeill has been collecting since 1955 what is now one of Australia's largest thematic stamp collections on the performing arts. She has collected and annotated over 1,000 pages of rare and beautiful stamps on this theme.

Sections of the collection have been exhibited in Sydney at various times, including during National Stamp Week in 1976, and it now looks as though we will have a chance to

see the collection again during Stamp Week in 1981. The venue will be the Exhibition Hall at the Opera House, starting around August next year.

Ms McNeill was recently honoured by being asked to join the 7th International Biographical Centre Congress on Arts and Communications, which was held in Amsterdam in July. Quizzes through enough at her achievement to sponsor her flight to Holland.



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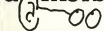
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WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



By Norman Kewell

So Saturday, September 6, is the sorry day Sydney's oldest and best theatre restaurant, the Music Hall, bedevilled by bureaucracy, finally closes its doors. The date was dictated actually by the commitments of some of the players in George and Lorna Miller's farewell offering, a revival of *East Is Love*, the show that opened the place back in 1961. Show folk from all over will be there, in strength or in spirit, on the last night and and as the occasion must be, all stops will be out to make it a theatrical event long to remember.

And showbiz must go on, so come a phrase, to the best of Aussie luck to Sydney's newest promoters and management team, Fanning and Townsend, who now have an office with a view on the 15th floor of GFL House in Sir John Young Crescent, Woolloomooloo. Peter Townsend, who will continue as NSW manager for J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd, and his partner, Maureen Fanning, share a long association with the local theatre scene.

It's expansion also for popular showbiz promotion lady Barbara James, now so much in demand she has taken experienced daughter Debbie into full partnership. The firm is now Barbara and Debbie James Publicity and that means another recording choir for their answering service by Barbara's actor husband Alfred Sander.

Sander, by the way, is a chess nut, but like all top players he really only enjoys being against an opponent worthy of his mettle, such as actor-director-writer Stanley Walsh. For other occasions Alfred has acquired a chess computer to play against. And he usually wins, despite the computer's

questionless about some of his moves!

David Williamson has completed his latest play, at present titled *Celestial Revolt*, and it has been handed to a potential producer. No name but I wouldn't be surprised to see it at the Nimrod.

Sydney's Ensemble Theatre comes of age next year, it being nearly twenty-one years since we climbed a narrow North Sydney stairway to a room that would give today's Services Department inspectors heart failure. There we saw Hayes Gordon's first production, *The Man*, with Clarissa Kaye and Jon Ewing. What a breakthrough that was! Still more remarkable to realize is that the Ensemble is now Sydney's longest established theatre company. Its upcoming productions include *A Golden Pathway Through Europe*, by Rod Milgate and *Devils*, by Howard Brenton, Trevor Griffiths, Ken Campbell and David Hare.

Next production by the Australia Council funded Music Box Theatre has the working title of *Loosewales*. It is now in the throes of a ten-weeks workshoping prior to a planned five-weeks public season, probably at the Cleveland Street Space. Cast includes Valerie Bader and brother Stephen Thomas, music is by Michael Carlos and choreography by Christine Kottal.

I hear that *Sideshow*, the mime group founded by Michael Matou and which staged its *Barbaric* at the Nimrod Downstairs a few months ago, will be back there later this year with a late night show, a new production loosely based on the story of *Broom and the Bear*.

Following the success item of Roger Hall's *Fleming*, New Zealand's Downstage Theatre plans an Australian tour of its production of Hall's *Producers of Mother England*. However, a *Forum* report that the tour is scheduled for September/October sponsored by the Elizabeth Theatre Trust, appears premature. As I hear it, the Trust's entrepreneurial division is interested, but there is nothing definite yet and it certainly won't happen this year.

A claim that such a tour would be a first for an NZ legit group is also incorrect. I remember, for instance, Ngila Marsh and the *Canterbury Players* at the Conservatorium years

ago in *Pirandello's Six Characters In Search Of An Author*.

All being well, writer Michael Aitken, his actress wife, Veronica Lang and their two children should now be headed for California to take up the scholarship in screen writing awarded him by the NSW Film Corporation.

That bristly beard Johnny Lockwood has been growing the past few weeks is for his role as Topsy in *Fiddler On The Roof*. He is the "top name" star with a new local company opening at the Civic Centre, Tweed Heads, on August 18.

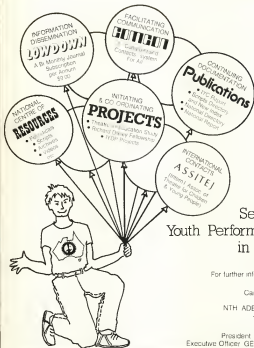
Johnny is also preparing another Christmas cabaret for his Auburn reception centre, Westalla Ballrooms. Called *Showtime 88*, it features entertainers Carla Marie, Jimmy Laurie, and Terry Ann, magician Noel Sainsy and a return by bass baritone Frederick, who scored strongly with patrons last year.

I mentioned last month the new "Whoever happened to..." feature in Britain's *The Stage*. I note that Susan Swinford, subject of the first inquiry, wrote giving full details of her career since she came to Australia. Latest issue to hand has an inquiry for Bill Kerr. I hope they've been told he is still going strong and currently doing a bit of scene-stealing playing *Doctore* with Stuart Wagstaff and Peta Teppane in Stanley Walsh's production of *My Fair Lady*, which is now on tour after its opening season at St George Leagues Club.

That only three of the more than 700 awards in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours were designated "For services to theatre" make them the more valued by the recipients. An AM to veteran actress Quenne Ashton and ADMs to Equity Presidents and veteran actor Don Crosby and to your humble scribe.

How's this for the longest-ever play title: *An Annotated And Annotated Rendering of Sections 22 to 29 Of The Town And Country Planning Act Of 1971 De More Mr And Mrs Wurdnagel of 23 Woodworth Avenue Westfield Gps Planning Permission For Their Showtime Transmitter Aerial*. It was a lunch-hour show staged by the Playwrights Company of Bristol. Talk about built-in word-of-mouth publicity!

AYPAA



Services to Youth Performing Arts in Australia

For further information contact

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Tel (08) 287 5111

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SPOTLIGHT

By Lucy Wagner

Actor, manager, producer, administrator, entrepreneur, Frederick J Gibson claims, with reason, to have "done almost everything in theatre since I was eighteen." Now director of Sydney's Theatre Royal since its opening nearly five years ago, he is thinking of taking on the additional work of convener of luncheons to honour leading theatricals.

This latest enterprise was inspired by the retirement of Ken Bradnack after twenty-eight years. "In my lifetime all the great entrepreneurs, such as my uncle Garnett Carroll and Frank Tait, have died in harness, and we couldn't let this occasion go by without notice. The idea of a testimonial dinner was conceived and, with positive feedback from Ken and others, Lloyd Martin and I got together and arranged it."

He lists among the highlights of his career, entreprenuring two RSC tours (Glenda Jackson as Hedda Gabler and Michael Redgrave in *The Mission*), having Executive Producer on *Man: From Christ* (Superstar and Canada) Unleashing, forming the first Elizabethan Theatre Trust Orchestra and administering the Marquise Theatre during his time as Deputy Administrator of the AFIT, accepting the commission of the Theatre Royal, presenting Deborah Kerr in *The Day After The Fair*, and acting as Vice President of the Theatre Proprietors and Entrepreneurs Association.

In 1975, when the MLC Centre was still under construction, Freddy Gibson was approached by Lend Lease and asked if he was interested in putting together a theatre for them. The idea of returning to a theatre operation, after the lonely life of eight years entreprenuring from an office, appealed to him. Lend Lease's offer was attractive and having just managed two very successful tours he thought he'd be happy to work with someone else's money.

So in 1976, on completion of the



Freddy Gibson and the Theatre Royal

1000 seat theatre, Freddy Gibson became the Director of the Theatre Royal. All artistic and management policy is in his hands (his Board take the role of advice and consent) and his first consideration is to have the facility wherever possible.

The Royal started off just playing hardtop to producers, but "In 1976 I saw the writing on the wall and that we would have to take up the slack occasionally by staging our own attractions. I went abroad in May that

year and that trip resulted in sixteen weeks of overseas attractions presented by English producers with some help from us. We were running out of Australian producers."

In 1979 the Theatre Royal produced two of its own plays, *The Red Shirts* featuring starring Rachel Roberts and *The Day After The Fair* with Deborah Kerr. These were both co-ventures with Paul Darity, owner of the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne, where he made all the arrangements for the Melbourne season, the Royal for Sydney and up-front costs were shared. Both productions were successes and in 1981 a similar set-up is in the offing with Nycopaid's *Night and Day* (no cast details yet).

In the meantime *Man In The Moon*, a four harder starring John Melton and Greer Plumb, is currently on at the Royal, a completely in-house show for which Gibson quickly negotiated the rights and contracts when he saw a four week gap in bookings looming.

Freddy Gibson's pre-occupations for the future of commercial theatre are not optimistic. He believes that in the next five years Her Majesty's will be lost to Melbourne and possibly the Sydney Maj will also go, leaving only one major commercial venue in each city. With rising production costs he feels that new ways have to be found of recouping them - and two things that should be done are an instigation of wild party ticket pricing. Australian theatre is cheaper than British and a lot cheaper than American - and an introduction of commercial marketing methods to rebuild a regular theatre-going public.

Another way that threatened theatres can survive is by working in conjunction with their Government funded brothers. The Theatre Royal has hosted many successful productions from subsidised companies over the years, starting with the Old Time's production of *Habes Copeys* in '76. Since then Nimrod's *The Club and Travelling North* have moved on there, *David Fish*, *Men and Li* and *Once A Catholic* came

from the MTC, and now both *Clare of Clare* and *No Nerves*. *No Nerves* have proved to be commercial successes for the Sydney Theatre Company this year.

Like Wilton Morley, Freddy Gibson believes the two forms of theatre should work closely together even in the planning stages, and hopes that if four companies will build suitable plays into their 1981 seasons, he can mount a sixteen week Festival of Interstate Drama next year with a show from each of the MTC, State Theatre Company of SA, QTC and another company — though not from Perth as transport costs would be prohibitive. A similar nine-week opera season from three interstate opera companies is also a possibility and it may be that Paul Durrty will do the same thing in Melbourne the following year.

But unlike Wilton Morley, Freddy Gibson does not believe that Australian actors are good box office. "This is partly the fault of the media who give you far more coverage for an overseas than for a local star, but also managements have not done enough to promote the star system. Barry Humphries and Reg Livermore have cut followings but would not be prepared to take even the lead in an ensemble play, for fear of losing their identities." Because of this, Mr Gibson has calculated his risk element on Neil Simon's *They're Playing Our Song* to star John Waters and Jackie Weaver, on 40%, attendances, with Deborah Kerr it was 80%.

But in spite of generally dire predictions, Freddy Gibson is not pessimistic about the future for his own theatre. Recently returned from London he points out that while he was there, nine West End shows had originated in subsidised theatres, and the problem there was to find producers willing to take the transfer risk. "If they can do it, why can't we?" he demands, and is eager to be involved in such projects. The Royal is forging ahead too with marketing strategies, such as playing on Sunday nights and offering \$20 dinner-theatre-and-parking packages with two restaurants. If commercial theatre needs innovation and imagination to survive in the '80s, the Theatre Royal has a head start with Freddy Gibson at the helm.

A SENSATIONAL NEW MUSICAL COMEDY IS ON ITS WAY TO AUSTRALIA — WATCH OUT FOR IT!

They're Playing Our Song



They're Playing Our Song

Book by
NEIL SIMON

Musical by
MARVIN HAMLISCH

Lyrics by
CAROLE BAYER SAGER

Starring
JOHN WATERS Starring
JACKIE WEAVER

Scenery and Properties by
DOUGLAS W. SCHMIDT
Musical Director: Musical Numbers Staged by
DALE BRINGLAND ROBYN MOASE

Directed by
PHILIP CUSACK

"THEY'RE PLAYING OUR SONG" IS A WALL-TO-WALL WONDERFUL HIT! — *NYC TV*

THERE IS A SHOW TO HEAT UP BROADWAY! IT IS FUN AND IT IS FUNNY, FULL OF BLITHE GOOD HUMOUR, HILARIOUS JOKES, AND WITTY, POINTED CHARACTERIZATIONS THAT ARE CREDIBLE AND LOVABLE! — *CLIVE BARNEZ, NEW YORK POST*

NEIL SIMON'S SINGING ANOTHER TRIUMPH. EASILY THE BEST MUSICAL OF THE SEASON! — *PHOENIX LEADS*

THE FIRST UNQUALIFIED, CERTIFIABLE MUSICAL HIT OF THE SEASON, WITH TUNES THAT CAN MAKE THE POP-CHARTS BY MARVIN HAMLISCH AND CAROLE BAYER SAGER!

— *WABC-TV SEVENTH NEWS*

THE TOAST OF BROADWAY... ENGAGING AND LIGHT HEARTED MUSICAL... SAGER AND HAMLISCH AT THEIR BEST... THE SONGS HAVE A HEART FELT HONESTY AND EXUBERANCE!

— *CHRISTINE HOGAN, SYDNEY MORNING HERALD*

OPENING SYDNEY — THEATRE ROYAL AUGUST 23

Alan Cassell: Profile

By Donna Sadka

Alan Cassell is not being brash when he says it's been easy "it" being his comparatively fast rise to being one of the most sought-after professional actors in Perth. It's a simple statement of fact.

It comes as something of a surprise, though, when this assured forty-seven year-old admits that he goes through an initial period of self-doubt each time he undertakes something new.

Quite recently he accepted the Jack Nicholson role in *Over the Top*. *The Cuckoo's Nest* for Edgar Meehan and after a week of reading the script was convinced he was all wrong for it, or at least for him. Knowing him of old, the director soothed and checked and reassured and, quite happily, he settled down to work on a performance which turned out to be, like most Cassell performances these days, very good indeed.

"I can't help it," he said. "I need to be edged into things, but once I've taken that first step I'm on the way. It's just that's typified by the fact that I started my career at forty-three."

Cassell, a young motor trimmer from Birmingham, came to W.A. with his wife Rose in 1957. Shunned by the anonymity afforded by a strange country he decided to audition for drama classes at the then flourishing little amateur theatre, Perth. "It was really brave for me at that time. Somehow in Birmingham you didn't do that sort of thing."

It was rather a pity they didn't for in a short time, strengthened by Jean Rule's acting classes, a raw natural talent emerged which brought pleasure to Perth audiences and others for the next twenty years. Staying in the motor trade but "a dedicated amateur" he acted in his spare time, undertaking lead roles in plays like *The Tender Trap*, *The Anniversary*, and *The Housewreath*.

Cassell still is a strongly naturalistic actor and believes there is a thread of humourlessness to be detected in almost every role. He has a relaxed, easy come style that makes him one of the funniest performers around when he chooses, yet he maintains that



the element of humour can should be found by the actor in even the biggest drama. He is not sure how to analyse it but concedes that it has something to do with an awareness of man's essential ludicrousness when he's in a position. "That sense that you look rather silly when you're at your most dramatic is somehow a levelling agent which stops a performance becoming overdone and heavy."

For a long time he was a semi-pro, accepting good parts which gave him an opportunity to do his thing but at the same time keeping a leg firmly in the motor trade. His first try at going fully professional in 1974 was short-lived. Although he quickly got work with Channel 9 for twenty-two episodes of *The Doctor*, followed by three shows with Crawfords in Melbourne, he ultimately went back to cars. He tries to rationalise it now but can't, quite. "I'd always had a job and my wife and my kids so security was very important to me I guess. As long as I had a permanent job I was okay."

It was not until eighteen months later when Edgar Meehan returned to Perth and told him he should stop "lingering" that he made the final break. "Edgie" was really very instrumental in the ultimate decision. He made sure I was in work. He put me in *The Gentle Road*, *Autie* (Neume) offered me *Mae For All Seasons*, and Edgar wanted me for *Virginia Woolf*. I guess I should've done it sooner because in fact it's been ridiculously

easy, but it's all very well being smart afterwards."

Sometimes later he recognised the professional risks of just doing play after play in Perth and in December 1977 went into the Australian tour of *The Boys From Nowhere* in Britain, turning down *Ben Hur* to do it. It was a gamble that paid off.

In Sydney with the *Boys* he was quickly offered *Dead at the Parade* and received offers to do the film *The Moses Moses*, which in turn led to *Cook's*, *Child* (for which he subsequently won a Sammy) and in quick succession *Long Knives* in *Breaker Morant*, the Perth children's television series *Parkin Island*, *Redskins* and most recently *The Club*. He had been considered for the part of the coach ("a pun I would kill for") but in the event it was given to Jack Thompson — an actor with whom, interestingly enough, he shares an image of laconic masculine braggadocio and mock self-deprecation. Instead he was cast as the administrator.

Essentially a contemporary man Cassell carries off roles like the newsboy in *Night and Day* (Stoppard) or the husband in *Bedroom* (Cockley) with ease. He seldom escapes a performance in the classic except where they can be related to recognisable (modern) human terms, as in *Mae Jade* where he played the servant strongly for his macho image.

Cassell is ambitious about his career and while he does not wholly subscribe to Norman Vincent Peale's dollar-oriented philosophy he does believe that, to a certain extent at least, man can be master of his fate. Certainly he is a lot less hassled by any crummy dates in his contract book and recently turned down a twenty-six week engagement for a national TV series "because it's too long."

The immediate future is taken care of by a Ford launch in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth and then a couple of plays, one of them Pinter's *Betrayal*, in the offing. After that who knows?

"Before I'd have worried about it," says Cassell, "but not anymore."

The Jigsaw Theatre Company

By Margaret Wells

Wherever Carol Woodrow goes she seems to leave a trail of theatre companies behind her. The tally in Canberra so far is three: Canberra Youth Theatre, The Jigsaw Company, and now Foak's Gallery. All of them are based, more or less, in the Red House Theatre Workshop Inc, formerly Red House, one of those ramshackle Commonwealth Houses that dot Canberra, abandoned by a tactful government whose minions now prefer brick veneers with white dome columns.

Red House is a maze of greyed and creaking floorboards, with lipped chunks of lime, walls covered with exuberant murals and social conscious graffiti, and an aura of good will, suppressed excitement and tremendous creativity. Some of the graffiti recall the Youth Theatre's production of *Polack*, in 1976, one of the most stunning theatrical events ever seen in Canberra, and directed (of course) by Carol Woodrow. The new Kitchen Theatre attests to the existence of Foak's Gallery, who, faced with paying thousands of dollars to rent rehearsal space, decided to design and equip their own space instead. Foak's Gallery is an ensemble of a dozen or so players now working intensively with Carol Woodrow (of course) and producing one play a year. Last year it was a brilliant *Alce in Wonderland*; this year they are devising their own play. Foak's Gallery are mostly Youth Theatre youth who grew up into Jigsaw and then into Foak's.

The Jigsaw Company is Canberra's only long-running and consistently working professional group, and the only "high profile" activity of Red House. They are a TIE, community theatre, regional theatre and children's theatre company, the only salaried members, (apart from the Youth Theatre Director) of Red House. They played six shows in 162 performances, in 1979 to average

audiences of nearly 125, (traping success for Canberra), and their salaries and expenses are funded - or at least partly funded - by the Department of the Capital Territory, the Australia Council and the ACT Schools Authority, plus the New South Wales Division of Cultural Activities. Its previous years the partial funding cast gloom and despond as they chose between dropping one member of the team and taking a month without salary for all members.



James, John O'Brien, Catherine, Paul, Constance, Margaret, Michael, Robert, Joe, Woodrow, Catherine, Margaret, John, Peter, Anne, David

I try chose the latter. This year, since they haven't had an increase in funding since 1976, funds will run out in September. Gloom and despond reign at the moment and typewriters run hot as they lobby for very well-deserved funds.

Both *Mr Jack, You Ad* and their new play, *700,000* (reviewed in this issue) were entries in the first Festival of Australian Drama run by Canberra Repertory and the Canberra Theatre Trust in June this year. Malcolm Robertson in his adjudication said that *Mr Jack, You Ad* was "the essence of what we all search for when working on a play... This production virtually flooded across the proscenium arch. We were always in safe hands."

For a play design for a schoolroom (because *700,000* is a TIE piece) to flood across the proscenium arch is quite an achievement, and the company had had grave doubts about entering it at

all, precisely for fear of that very proscenium and what it could have done to the play.

The company seems to be thinking a lot about integrity at the moment. In their production of *Wind on the Willows* last year, they felt some unease about the moral values inherent in the plot, and this, as well as their own negative reactions to scripts chosen by other TIE groups has led to a change in their policy on children's theatre from now on they will be producing no more adaptations of classics, but will be developing new plays with a strong Australian cultural and multicultural base, a synthesis of traditions, myths and historical events. Their first children's theatre piece under this new policy will be *The*

Marsh Gush Gush Gush, which opens in August.

At the time of writing, it is still a little in search of a play. The company feel that they are working so co-operatively as a collective at the moment that they have been able to produce material which is a synthesis of opposing views within the company, rather than a compromise between them. Companies, they say, often seem forced to compromise their integrity because they need to choose a script in a hurry, or because of the influence of a dominant individual. It is the duty of the whole company to know and understand what the play is saying, and to ensure that it says what the whole company believes. Partly for this reason their work with John Romani on *The 700,000*, they say was very satisfying, and an experience they would very much like to repeat. He is a writer of "tremendous integrity."

OZ CABARET

Cabaret is one of the most important theatrical forces emerging in Australia today. It promises to be a major influence on the performing arts in the '80s.

Cabaret is not "New Faces" variety. It is not music hall, it is not vaudeville. It walks the tightrope between traditional theatre and variety. Its content is both social and political with an emphasis on satire.

Cabaret is a laboratory, a testing ground for young artists to experiment with content and theatrical styles.

Contemporary Australian cabaret found a home with the opening of the Flying Trapeze Cafe in Melbourne in 1974.

Located in downtown Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, an inner suburb of this city, it was originally an Hungarian eating house with a small shop front. It seated sixty people squashed together and was decorated with old circus posters and art pieces of all styles contributed by local artists in return for a feed.

Trapeze founder John Pinder was interested in developing an entertainment venue committed to finding new ways of presenting popular entertainment. It was a move away from the

traditional theatre forms as presented by the Peppin Factory and La Mama in much the same way as the original cabarets of Paris in the 1880's were. These cabarets were smoke, sleazy and intimate.

They were called "incubators for non-conformists", "schools for laughter".

The audience of artists, students and elements of the bourgeoisie with a surfeit of leisure under their belts, came to see a programme of rebellious satire which provoked both hostility and applause. The evening embraced many facets of the performing arts: music, song, dance, magic, puppets, impressions and often instant art works. Similarly, the early audiences at the Trapeze saw the emergence of a truly indigenous and contemporary cabaret style of entertainment.

It was presented by talents as diverse as Steve J Spears and Jane Clifton both theatrically committed people. The Razzle Dazzle Revue, a group which had come together from Melbourne University architecture faculty, revues and Proaches La Creme and the Baby Berkleys, whose founder Henry Mann was a retail salesman and son of a St Kilda night



club owner. Mann's partner Noel was a mysterious Englishman who claimed to have been a member of the '60s pop group The Money Beats.

These acts were supported by a motley crew of artists, including Arnhem the Fair-Dealer, Eddie Marsche crooner (real name Chris Crofts an internationally acclaimed Australian poet maker), Joy Durston (later cast from the stage of the Trapeze into the lead role in the movie *Big Train* McKew, an eccentric drag queen; Sam Angello, a saggary little Italian street boy turned magician and Rod Symons who often appeared undiscovered at the height of the Skyhooks hysteria to accompany various acts on his nights off.

These performers presented content and theatrical styles as different as their characters.

Nights at the Trapeze were marked by many memorable incidents.

An essential part of Arnhem's act was his disappearing ducks. They often as not ended up in the kitchen owing scraps instead of being on stage at the scheduled disappearing time.

One evening Gern, John Pinder's wife, was so incensed by comical sexist remarks from Steve J Spears

By Ralph Kerle

that she hauled a chocolate in his face — Spears, ever the professional, continued, chocolate and all.

From an original audience of students and artists it quickly became important that Melbourne's cognoscenti was seen at the Trappee. They mixed with the droids who lunched in off the street to steal food and alcohol and abuse the patrons.

One particularly outrageous gentleman of the street grabbed a plate of roast beef from a table of Toorak ladies and rushed out into the night. He returned after devouring the meal to discuss his badly gashed head with them — an ugly scene!

The staff got into the act too — a handsome drinkwater was caught by the proprietor upstairs making love to a well-known female food writer and was obliged to streak through the restaurant to return to the sink.

But out of this chaos came an opportunity for performers to work together and develop a style of cabaret which was uniquely Australian. To date the Trappee has produced approximately forty shows, the more memorable including *The Whole Show*, *Adam-Garbage*, *The Chequered Strips Ever Told Missing Persons*, *Strawz Cabaret and Brand*, *Mime and Soda*.

These shows have employed some forty performers every year.

During its chequered career with some thirteen different partner owners almost 50,000 people have passed through its doors.

Perhaps the Trappee's finest hour was in November 1975 when the entire audience was sent home early on election night to witness the painting of the arts in Australia.

But the Phoenix rose from the ashes and cabaret caught on.

The Razzle Dazzle Revue, led by Rod Quantick — one of Australia's leading alternative stand-up comics — moved to the now defunct Foblets in Carlton in 1976 where their style developed as a comedy revue ensemble. Foblets was managed by idealistic anarchy. Performers' wages were on extravagant art interiors. After two years of very successful shows, but totally irresponsible management, the venue closed its doors.

Subsequently in 1979 the Razzle Dazzle Revue Collective purchased an

aging Spanish restaurant in Burnwick Street, Fitzroy and converted it into the Comedy Cafe. This operation is very similar to the Flying Trappee in its seating capacity and format of food and NYO licence. Theatricality the collective is also dedicated to developing a very Australian style of humour, but a very important difference is, however, that this is a commercially operated venue managed and owned entirely by the performers themselves.

With foresight, in 1977 Pinder and his new partner Roger Evans — co of the famed Sydney venue Kestons, probably the city's first contemporary cabaret venture opened the Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant and Zoo. The premises were an old lodge hall in Smith Street, Collingwood which was converted to an entertainment



complex, seating 200 people a night and employing more than thirty staff with a full 3am liquor licence.

Pinder's flamboyant style as an entrepreneur and his astute judgement led him to back new Australian talent. Amongst his many successful shows were Circus Oz, now a hit in Sydney and on their way to a European tour, *Preacher La Crime* and the Bushy Berkleys, who have earned themselves a very successful niche in the European cabaret scene and Nigel Tuffit who created the puppet extravaganza *Mamma's Little Horror Show*.

As well as supporting Australian talent Pinder gave it the opportunity to work with overseas talent. He

imported L. O. Brown's *Black and White Musical Show* from America. Its heavy political content was presented to Christmas good-time crowds looking for bland entertainment — truly a bold and successful move.

Today the Last Laugh is probably the leader in changing the trends and styles of commercial theatre in Australia.

It wasn't really until last year that a Sydney cabaret scene emerged.

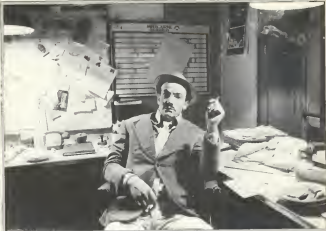
The numerous licensed clubs in Sydney had always been home to traditional night club entertainment in the American style — vacuous content, the re-banking of old standards, glitter and razzmatazz. An opportunity to view your favourite "as seen on TV" personality in the flesh. Anything that attempted to be different was not accepted by the club managements.

In response to the dearth of outlets for a more contemporary and challenging performance style, a group of performers formed a loose collective called Cabaret Conspiracy. In February 1979 they began Sunday night shows in a back street coffee shop in Surry Hills.

The roots of their style were very much in the gay scene. With Doreen Fish — drag queen — as compere, some of the more popular acts to emerge were Jack Caroline, a seventy-year-old banker and his dog Chen whose roasting rendition of the Village People's "YMCA" was accompanied by a short lecture on old age. Tormenter a comedy duo and Michael Manou and Kevin English who both worked and toured with Lindsay Kemp's mime troupe for some years.

Manou later formed his own company called Sideshow, which is, along with Circus Oz, one of the most exciting new companies in Australia today. Both are innovators in their particular style of theatre — Sideshow's baroque and theatricality and the Circus Oz's presentation of traditional circus skills.

A new promotional organisation, Glover, Hocking and Woods (Woods was an owner of the Trappee between 1976 and 1978) has been formed. It produced the Circus Oz show in Sydney. Here is the first sign that commercial entrepreneurs are aware of the gay push.



Cabaret Conspiracy found a permanent home in Paris, late 1979. Paris is housed in a bar in Oxford Street which was originally designed for dance. Another couple of venues in Sydney worth noting are Stranded, a new-wave dance which has regular acts again supplied by Cabaret Conspiracy, and the Lounge Club in Glebe, a folk club invaded by cabaret on Monday nights.

The Adelaide scene is still very young, but enthusiastic. It is hampered by a lack of venues suitable in both size and location. Radio 3MMM has staged three cabaret shows in hotels with four night seasons. A loosely formed group, Cabaret Communique, has been formed but at present is inactive. A definite Adelaide cabaret style has yet to emerge. However the popular club, Patches, in North Terrace, a long black mirrored smoky room, features a "new wave" drag music ensemble. The Space in Adelaide's Festival Centre has also presented cabaret.

Cabaret has always been innovative,

throughout its long history it has provided the impetus for art and theatrical movements. Because of this many of its performers were incarcerated in times of political censorship in Europe.

Cabaret at various times has served as a meeting place for art greats like Picasso, Brellon, Loure, and Bouquet. It is believed that Cocteau actually owned Le Bocal, the centre of Paris night life during the '20s. It was out of the Swiss Cabaret Voltaire that the Dadaist movement grew. Paul and Dietrich were children of cabaret, Bertolt Brecht owned his own cabaret in Berlin.

Cabaret didn't establish itself in Anglo-Saxon countries until the late '30s. Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Jonathan Miller and Alan Bennett rocked London's West End with *Beyond the Fringe* in 1961 and Bob Dylan emerged from the coffee shop scene to become the '60s major poet.

The reason cabaret has always been such a strong force is because its entertainers have always used it as a

medium to break down censoring art populates. The audience is prepared for excitement — it has a licence it doesn't have in traditional theatre. The space is small and intimate, the entertainers are reach-out-and-touch close and alcohol is an integral part of the evening. That combination is explosive.

The entertainers are often provocative in the extreme and gloriously explore the most taboo subjects, but the main criteria is always entertainment — the iron behind the velvet.

Australian cabaret is in its infancy but with the recent interchange of artists between Sydney and Melbourne it is developing into a strong and nationally growing movement. Its content reflects current social and political trends in Australia in a very immediate way, but most of all it is attempting to find new indigenous performance art styles.

Ralph Aske is the proprietor of the Flying Saucer Cafe and a drama graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts.

DRESSING IT UP

The future of opera/by Greg Curran

Opera in Australia receives a total of State and Federal governmental subsidy in the vicinity of \$7.25 million. So practitioners in all areas of the Arts where subsidy is relevant should always be interested in the doings. But they rarely are. Of the \$7.25 million, \$6.15 goes to the beleaguered Australian Opera, currently embroiled in turmoils that have been building up since 1976. South Australia's State Opera does the next best with \$864,000 (a partial legacy of the Dunstan era), Victorian State Opera (\$400,000), Queensland Opera \$228,000 — mostly from the State Government — Bjelke-mashers please note), Western Australian Opera \$212,000 (again mainly from the State Government), and last comes Canberra with \$69,000. Because the greater part of its commitment of funds in any one financial year is devoted to opera, the Australia Council commissioned a report from a Committee on Opera Music Theatre and its future in Australia. That report has now come out.

It consists of 149 pages, has 4 parts (13 Chapters) and 5 Appendices. Part A gives the background and discusses the need for Opera Music theatre (surveys show general public support for the Arts and so on).

Part B makes general observations (in Chapter 3) about housing, touring, co-operation between companies etc. Chapter 4 is devoted to the Australian Opera and this must be read in connection with Appendix A which deals with the departure of former General Manager Peter Hemmings. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the other companies above. Chapter 7 "Orchestral Resources" is most valuable for its proposals to wean the AOTT orchestras from the grasp of its curmudgeonly controller and the musicians' attitude towards "pit" players (opera) as against "concert" performers, who are apparently believed to possess some mythical superiority. This is an



excellent and informative chapter. It ends Part B.

Chapter 8 attempts to define other forms of music theatre — there are references to *Madama Butterfly*, *Swan Lake*, even *The Venetian Tunes*. Scholarly and readable. Chapter 9 is however the only gritty as far as musicals are concerned. The proposition is for the setting up of a Musical Development Fund which would not subsidise so much as invest in musicals. End of Part C.

Chapter 10 covers Education and Audience Reaction (earnest, careful, a bit dull). Chapter 11 with the inadequacy of present training arrangements. Chapter 12, Marketing and Private Support. Chapter 13 summarises the various proposals.

In the Appendixes A to E, as I have indicated, the Hemmings affair, B, an analysis of performances by ABC orchestras, C, notes on projected expenditures and income up to 1985, D, overview of survey findings and E,

a list of those who wrote to and saw the Committee (lots and lots, most impressive, this).

Within Part B, the committee proposes the cutting down of TAO's touring commitments over a period of five years. After that the AO will play Sydney and Canberra (but other places only when necessary); Victorian State Opera - a very impressive company to date - will cover Melbourne (and Tasmania), and there will be visits by the State Opera of South Australia to WA. That latter and Queensland will still have smaller companies and there is even hope that the NT may see some opera in other words, regional opera will become more the thing.

The most interesting part of the report was bound to relate to the Australian Opera, the most prestigious company in Australia and the greatest drain on public money.

The AO Board has been represented to us through its upper echelon as a repository of business expertise. The inference has been inescapable from press reports that this is the main quality considered by the Board. Recently a consultant's report even suggested that the new General Manager need have "at least a layman's knowledge of opera". In other words the GM's job is to be a businessman too.

The Committee makes no specific reference to the Board's approach to its own definition and priorities. However in Chapter 4 paragraph 29 the Report points out that the company's method of steering new directors is essentially the self-perpetuating and closed and the Board is too large for effective policy management. Moreover reference is made to the "abrupt departures of executives, constant reiteration of financial problems, ousting of directors and senior meetings in which young proceeded with the aid of proxies gathered in behind-the-scenes faction fight" (4.28).

The Committee suggests that "at critical times the leadership of the Company has been unimpressive", and that many of the problems could have been avoided, with more tactful and effective leadership (4.29). The proposals include a restructuring of the Board, new leadership thereof, a general manager with more than "a



layman's knowledge of opera", a reduction in size of the Board, and more democratic elections to achieve in the Board "a balance of skills and knowledge" (4.30 and 4.31).

Despite these recommendations, after the Annual General Meeting on Friday 27 June the Board remained virtually the same. With one exception, the new Directors are identical with the old ones, as are the main office bearers. If the Australia Council adopts the report in certain areas, there is room for a head-on collision between it and the AO.

No consideration of the AO would be complete without consideration of its musical directorship. It is by now well known that former General Manager Peter Hemmings and present Musical Director Richard Boryage clashed over areas of responsibility, and indeed, over repertoire. Both the Chairman and Board of the AO, and indeed, Mr Hemmings himself, are ordered to some extent over certain areas of the so-called "Hemmings affair". The question whether the Board should have supported Boryage against Hemmings is not really answered. Mr Boryage garners neither blame nor praise in the affair. He might never have been around.

Elsewhere in the report somewhat delicate references to the repertoire favoured by him pass without much in the way of qualitative comment.

However, in Chapter 4, paragraph 17 the Committee sets out the tenures of the three Musical Directors to date. According to the years given, Mr Boryage, who commenced in 1976, already appears to have been Musical Director longer than one of his predecessors, Carlo Felice Cillario (1969-1971), and at least as long as the other, Edward Dowson (1972-1975).

The Committee notes that each of these musical directors has influenced the company's repertoire, and go on to say this:

Assuming that the pattern of musical directors staying a few years and then moving on to another international post is continued, when Richard Boryage's tenure of office concludes an appointment of a Musical Director with different tastes can be expected to give the repertoire yet another emphasis, with balance being achieved over a run of years (4.17).

On the subject of balance, the Company is criticised for failure to present modern works and Australian operas. The Committee also bakes the over-elaborate productions that often make do for other values in this company's presentations. They found that "it is questionable whether unlimited funds always have a positive effect on standards since better quality may be more related to the morale and approach of performers than additional opulence of 'style' in other words, extravagance should be avoided.

Instead of taking heed of a perfectly reasonable statement, the AO seems content to continue on its merry way. In an interview in *The Australian* newspaper of 30 June 1980, weeks after the release of the report, designer Michael Steiner talks of brigades in *Madama Butterfly* dressing up in stolen pieces of women's laundry. "We are running good costumes," he chortles "to make them look worn and used. There are two girls in wardrobe who have kind of Black and Decker drills with which they fly at the clothes and they spray them with laundry dye."

There's more to come. "On top of (Continued over page)

these holy wonders I am getting pink and orange silk hats, feathered coats, all sorts of frippery. Of course its not all these gaudy stuff. Jean has a flash-black number for sitting around the ficus." Hardly the approach that inspires any confidence in the seriousness of the enterprise. The interview is appropriately entitled "Dressing it up".

Despite the criticism directed at the AO the committee's attempts to rationalise the hegemony of a regional policy, the AO is nevertheless still affirmed by the Committee as the leading company with high artistic standard and fine ensemble. There is also the obligatory qualification in the direction of "International Standards", a current cliché the report might well have avoided. Indeed the committee actually favour expansion of the company's season in Sydney with more performances, including 20th century opera, operetta and musicals, and, at least at State level, an increased subsidy!

The Committee says nothing about the following glaring deficiencies in the Company's history and operations:

1. The failure to get sufficient work out of the elaborate, expensive *Lacrinae Borgie* production, which has lain dormant since its initial Sydney season.

2. To Selmi's *Norma*, another vehicle for Dame Joan with little mileage on the clock, the same comment applies.

3. *Iphigénie à Aulide* is also largely unused. Here is another Donizetti opera, with *Lacrinae* representing two out of the three Donizetti's the committee appears to have been wowed with, on balance of repertory, and as against two Wagners, for the period 1976-1980. This would be bad enough, but including *Don Pasquale* in Tasmania we have four Donizetti, not three, which leads to a Donizetti-Wagner ratio of practically 2:1.

4. Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* was only staged four times in Adelaide and then disappeared.

5. Prokofiev's *War and Peace* in a fine production initially so successful was never brought back.

6. *Peter Grimes* has not been staged for twenty years and not by this company.



The company had in its ranks for many years, one of the great interpreters of this role, Ronald Dowd. The only comment the Committee make about Mr Dowd is that he is 63.

7. The AO is presenting both *Alcina* (Handel) and *Le Revenue Fugitive* (Puccini), and apparently *Thomas' Havel* in the near future. The reports make reference without objection to the first two and does not refer at all to the third. All of these works must, by any standards, be considered low on the priority scale. Moreover, if the San Francisco Opera can do a concert version of Rossini's *Tamara* (with Marilyn Horne) to save money, then the AO can do the same with *Alcina*.

8. The report does not mention two works which are also under suspicion of being presented in the near future. These are *The Beggar's Opera* and *The Magician*. Plans to present both these works, if still current, are simply absurd. Where is the AO going to get seven super-star singers capable of doing justice to the Meyerbeer opera and what reason can a company with no Wagner, little modern opera and no experimental work have to put on *The Beggar's Opera*?

Indeed there would be many to disagree with the Committee about the so-called standards of the company which in most departments and certainly in any ensemble sense has declined since the heyday of the

Alcorno Doves. Weather team in the early seventies. No real ensemble is achieved simply because singers remain geographically isolated from other countries and accordingly painted into a local job situation. Not unless some artistic forces are at work. It is highly significant that for many years there has been no position of Artistic Director.

The report assumes that the company is popular and up to the present season there has been some basis for this. However the report is not up to date for the simple reason that it is not precisely contemporary with the present season. Seats are being advertised for nearly every performance. They cannot even sell out Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* almost new to Australia but one that should sell, given composer and subject.

Nor is the planning a model of commercial cunning. True there is variety, but in strange proportions. As I write this there opens *L'Alceste*, a lovely old opera but not a heavy priority in the early Verdi computations. *Franco, L'Alceste* and *Lacrinae Mader* might be considered well ahead. This opera is scheduled for eleven performances. Despite the presence in the cast of Switzerland and Smith the work does not appear to be selling out. Good seats are still being advertised. Much as I like Janacek, I doubt that his most rabid advocate would propose thirteen initial performances of *Katka Kabanova*.

The Magic Flute always a sell out, comes for only five nights, while *Frei Dances*, never much of a success, claims nine. A *Mohammar* (Nigh's *Alcina*), one of the finest productions ever seen in Australia and a great success the first time around, gets only three. Why bother to do it at all?

The season is a strange one. The organisation itself has become even stranger. In the great tradition of the Old Folio wind-up and to the inevitable tail-tutting of the Silverdale, someone should pull out the plug. We should have a completely new regional Sydney company - new board, new management, more moderate subsidy levels and above all an artistic policy. In any event, if the present board of the AO holds to its course, the Australia Council must soon step in. I think it is only a matter of time. Reason must finally prevail.

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15 September, 1981—Decision advised by

mid-December, 1981

15 February, 1982—Decision advised by

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INTERN

Sisterly feelings — wizardry and insight

By Irving Wardle

Among the other puzzles Alan Ayckbourn sets the reviewer in *Sisterly Feelings* (National Theatre) is whether one speaks of it in the singular or the plural.

It all hinges on a bet between two sisters, Abigail and Dorcas, first seen having a bad time with their regular partners on the waterlogged coastline of their mother's funeral, and both fancying an affair with the married and unmarried Simon. To settle this delicate matter they throw a coin. Heads and Abigail gets him, to the gentlemen's chagrin of her reasonably worse spouse, but Dorcas lies him, to the husband's despair of her particular good boyfriend. The piece thus has two variant second and third acts and a narrative at the end of the second act gives the winner the chance to thank again: you have to see the production four times to exhaust all the possible permutations.

This kind of thing is what has given Ayckbourn a reputation for "ingenuity", and I wish there were a less belabouring term for the staidest combination of technical wizardry and unforced human insight to which he alone has the key. Physical obstacles are what activate his invention, and the structure of this piece is really an answer to the question of why the family should assemble five times on the same stretch of muddy hillside. Finding the protests also releases plot and character. We thus proceed to a stormy prime: a night under covers (for Abigail), across-country run (for Dorcas), and a wedding party finale which has neither of the middle acts equally well and restores the sisters to their sister gap. The variant stories are rich in ironic overlaps and contrasts, like those of the Norman Conquests. For instance, when Dorcas is lying a lie she brings a down perfectly, when Abigail lies it, a crash-lands into a tree.

As in ordinary life, the piece develops in answer to physical contingencies, and this prevents Ayckbourn from ever playing the god with his characters. For is too busy

getting them out of one tight spot after another. What kind of man, for example, would switch so easily between the two girls? A narcissist, of course, and as soon as Stephen Moore (Simon) jumps down between them, offering a mock-modest sample of the genuineness to them, you get his number.

As the same time, the variant developments of the story push the characters in opposing directions without ever detaching their basic identity. Simon the amiable camper becomes decidedly unsympathetic as an arrogantly competitive runner. Stalloned the congenital poet, remains a slovenly outsider in one version, only in blossom in the other, into a keen young sports reporter in violent check-out and cockblood tribby. Such transformations also overtake characters not personally involved in the game of chance, such as the lugubrious Uncle Len, a taciturn police officer given to voicing opinions like "It's a free country" in tones of deepest regret, and converting every family gathering into a criminal investigation, but with the cross-country run, even this one-track fanatic branches

into new territory as a sports fan.

The production, by Christopher Morahan and the author, is superbly cast and elaborates the textual challenges into intricate physical comedy. Moments like that of an invisible wasp pinning its way through the pinechairs, a plectrum dead between two real estates, or the spurned poet's stealthy entrance of the picnic (his startled bespectacled head popping through bushes on every side) are what make up the fabric of the show. You may mistake at the end reflecting on the accidental nature of human relationships, but the comic counts for more than the devastation, and if there is any here it is Alan Taggart, an at once a live peep of apian naturalism and a trampolinist for the company.

Australian readers may be glad to learn that after the lingering death of *The Club* on the Old Vic, David Williamson's *Traveling South* has opened to a deservedly enthusiastic welcome at the Lyric Hammersmith. The production is by Michael Blakemore, and if the Normans cast were put around I think they would have applauded too.



From left: Moore (Simon) and Anne Carrigan (Dorcas) in the N.F.T. *Sisterly Feelings*. Photo: Keith Cope

ATIONAL



Susan Waddock and Philip Brucato in *A Couple Who's Clunkin' Long Around Talking*
Photo: Douglas J. Daniels

When Less Is More

By Karl Lenz

Recently, Off-Broadway has been admirably demonstrating that getting back to essentials can be a rewarding experience (the word "rewarding" is meant in all its connotations, for much of this movement has a practical economic motivation). But by one of the wonderful paradoxes characteristic of the theatre, when less is at hand it often seems to stimulate more imagination, more imagination.

New York has recently been treated to a "back to basics" course from Peter Brook and his Le Centre International de Créations Théâtrales. At La MaMa's Annex the company presented the same three plays, with rather this year in

Australians, *The T. M.*, and *The Conference of the Birds*. Brook strips everything down to the essentials: costumes, properties, settings, and especially texts. The imaginative use of two-able work in *The T. M.* to create a dozen different theatrical effects is indicative of Brook at his best. All three plays give evidence of a gradual process, with imperfections and occasional material being refined over a lengthy period.

The resulting purity and creative force of Brook's troupe cannot be disputed. More questionable, however, is the dependence upon narrative rather than enactment and Brook's fondness for the sweeping metaphor to give universal import to his dramas. With this meaning for archetypal significance, Brook seems to be feeding sugar to the general while starving the particular.

A much more down-to-earth exercise, but still one with ambitions in *Footprints* at the Theatre of St. Peter's Church. There a deliciously over-theboarded by Mary Rue that uses a cascade of period songs to give a

picture of life in New York at the turn of the century. The beautifully balanced cast of five sing, dance and change characters with the ease of changing hats. We see immigrants, vaudeville, factory workers, Teddy Roosevelt, actress Anna Held and many more. This juxtaposition of known and unknown is matched by the selection of folk songs that are remarkably varied and evocative. All the production elements of *Footprints* have been kept on scale to create a small but merry-faceted gem. It is a gem that Broadway already has its eyes on for the fall season and it's to be hoped that in the primary advertising to the hordes of Broadway this delicate package will not be damaged.

Brevity is not too evident in another Off-Broadway success, John Ford Noonan's *A Couple Who's Clunkin' Long Around Talking*. This two-woman comedy shows how a housewife, a new-comer from Texas, changes the life of her Westchester neighbor. The premise and its results seem more suitable for TV sitcoms, and indeed there's a nipping suspicion that this might be the reason for the play's success. This TV effect is heightened by the pace's lack of credibility, despite a narrative which includes not only the kitchen sink but hot running water to boot. What credibility does exist comes from Helen Brennan who as the Texan gives a comic performance that is refreshingly eccentric while still being totally controlled. She makes the predictable seem unpredictable — no mean feat. The same theme at two women's interaction was shown to better advantage in *These Women*, directed by Zoe Caldwell, which came and went earlier in the season. Meanwhile *These Women* has enjoyed considerable success. I suppose one should not look for justice in the theatre, even in small packages.

Perhaps this impetus has been reflected in the Theatrical Scheme of Things for the discovery of a new young playwright Bill C. Davis. His *Mass Appeal* at the Manhattan Theatre Club is his first full-length work produced in New York. Again there are only two characters, a complacent middle-aged priest and a rebellious young seminarian. From standard opposing positions, at the beginning of the play Davis is able through a series of exchanges to turn the characters inside out. By the end of the evening we have an entirely

(Continued over page)

alliance of words and along the way we move from the splendour of the Catholic Church to the nature of survival and of love within that organisation.

It is a serious thing, but such is Davis' skill that he has each character forcing a sense of proportion upon the other, and the result for the audience is a great deal of laughter. These laughs arise so logically from the complexities of character revealed that they seem consistent with the play's serious purpose, even adding a further dimension to it.

As the screenwriter Eric Roberts is all awkward hesitations, while hinting at suppressed hysteria just below the surface. As the priest Midge O'Shea is giving one of the best performances on view in New York. It is a comic portrayal with just a touch of the tragic to it, displaying a profound that is a joy to behold. The play is the diabolical debut of actress Gaudine Fitzgerald and she steps into stage centre in one bound.

Although the actors and director have done right by their author, it is in the final analysis, the author who has done right by them. Bill C Davis is a discoverer. He says he has seven more full-length plays in his trunk. This one he has given us. *Mass Appeal* may be a small package but it's the most convincing reminder in many a season that less can be more.



Eric Roberts and Midge O'Shea in 'Mass Appeal'



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EDMOND ROSTAND

Edmond Rostand was born to a well-to-do family in Marseilles on April Fools' Day 1868. After studying law, Rostand worked in a bank. In 1890 he married and published his first volume of verse. After the failure of his poetry he turned to the stage and wrote *Les Romanesques* (1894), a witty reworking of the Romeo and Juliet story which was later used as the book for the long-running musical *The Fanny Hills*. This was followed by *La Princesse Lointaine* (1895), a play about troubadour love. From the world of the troubadours he moved to the world of the Bible in 1897 with his play *Le Savant*. Both these plays underlie Rostand's

Hamlet and *Lorenzaccio*. Rostand's last play *Choucroute* (1910) — written after an absence of ten years from the stage — was also written for Coquelin, though he never lived to play it. A slight, unfinished play *Le Dernier Nour de Don Juan* was published posthumously. Whatever term we wish to give to Rostand's theatre, ultimately, it gave me to no movement, and even at the height of its popularity, it was fighting a losing battle against the sterner, less facile theatre of Naturalism.

In 1918, during the Armistice celebrations, Rostand caught a cold and died of pneumonia at the age of fifty. A genial and kind man, the only aggressive act of his life

*"If he had had a big nose then at least he would
have had something in common with his erudite,
brave, witty, literary hero."*

attractions for the then fashionable Symbolist movement (One of Rostand's favourite painters was Weber, a very minor Symbolist master, whom he commissioned to decorate the dressing room in his residence near Baudre).

Elements of this Symbolist taste undoubtedly colour the neo-Romanticism of Rostand's theatre, even in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, his most overtly Romantic play. *L'Aiglon* (1900) a play about Napoleon's son is very much in the Romantic manner. Its title role was created by Sarah Bernhardt, who was then in the habit of essaying some of the great male roles (she had already played

was to challenge to a duel the brilliant writer Raymond Roussel, who had said of Rostand that "if he had had a big nose then at least he would have had one thing in common with his erudite, brave, witty literary hero". *Cyrano de Bergerac* was, of course, Rostand's greatest literary creation and was first presented at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre, Paris, on December 28, 1897. It was an immediate success and at the height of his glory, Rostand was lavished with praise and entailed as the new Victor Hugo. Rostand was elected into the Académie Française in 1901, becoming one of its youngest-ever members.

THE CYRANO OF HISTORY

The historical Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac was born in Paris, 1619, the son of a lawyer. Three years later his family moved to their estate just out of Paris, part of which included the small fief of Bergerac. Despite what Rostand's play may tell us, Cyrano was not a Gascon and had no connection with the town of Bergerac on the Dordogne (though now the town has a "Hotel Cyrano" and sells picture postcards of Rostand's big-nosed impostor).

After an education at the Collège de Beauvais (during which time he met his life-long friend and future literary executor, Henri Le Bret), whom he acquired a good education and a hearty dislike of arbitrary authority, he began to mix with the literary Bohemian culture of the period. Eventually he joined M de Carben de Casteljaous's company of guards, where he earned a reputation as a quarrelsome fellow prone to duelling. During the Thirty Years' War, he was shot and wounded at the siege of Mouron, 1639, and a year later he was wounded again at Arras. Realizing he was tempting fate if he stayed a soldier any longer, he abandoned his military career and in 1641 returned to a life of study, during which time he attended, possibly along with Molière, the classes of Gassendi, an Epicurean philosopher, mathematician and free-thinker.

Exploits of the period, according to Le Bret, included drafting a band of one hundred hired ruffians in order to protect the poet-songwriter Ligneux. Even a dear friend like Le Bret is hard put to hide Cyrano's faults, which included an extravagant vanity, a sycophantic attitude to any potential patron, and an ill-tempered disposition.

Although he was a serious writer and student, Cyrano indulged in a rather dissolute way of life which included gambling (a hobby that quickly helped impoverish his father) and whoring, the latter resulting in a stubborn case of syphilis. A comedy *Le Peuple Joue* from which Molière stole sections, was written during these years, as was a series of literary letters (*Lettres Diverses*, *Lettres Satiriques* and *Lettres Amoureuses*) which were excruciating in witty elegance and inventiveness. The tragedy *Le Mort d'Agrippine*, mentioned briefly in Rostand's play, was staged during his lifetime but had to be taken off when it was the centre of a scandal over an innocent phrase which was taken as an insult to the Eucharist. *L'Amour Mortel*, his most famous work, was published posthumously in 1637, and it is parts of this famous novel that Rostand has Cyrano use in Act Three to describe his journey to the moon.

Fate, or perhaps an enemy in the guise of that peculiar jester, caused a wooden beam to fall on Cyrano's head one day as he was entering his patron's house. He never really recovered from the blow and, with the syphilis (which had kept him from females for the last ten years of his life), it wasn't surprising that in July 1635, at the age of thirty-five, he died at the house of his cousin, Pierre de Cyrano. For three centuries he had to endure anonymity, plus his all too popular, monstrously-nosed impostor (the nose of the historical Cyrano, although large, was not as preposterous as that of Rostand's hero), before he accrued the recognition he deserved. His literary position is now acknowledged, so much so, in fact, that he is now a more highly regarded author than Rostand himself.

The Others

If Cyrano was fortunate in being able to rediscover his historical self, others were not as lucky. Roxane, Christian, De Guiche, Ragueneau were transformed by Rostand's literary imagination, which made friends of strangers, provided assurances that were foreign to the real period, made innocents experienced and gave youth to those who were, at the time of the events the play narrates, into middle age.

After the premiere of the play many people were critical of these transformations, and in 1898 Emile Magas published a book called *Les Erreurs de l'identification de 'Cyrano de Bergerac'* pointing out the historical errors he had found. Rostand defended himself, saying he was entitled to poetic licence, and besides, historical details were unimportant as a literary work was not history. Even the critics could not deny that his evocation of the spirit and colour of seventeenth century France is excellent.



Richard Dadd: Prince Arthur as the actor 'Don Juan' (c. 1865)

FAMOUS CYRANOS

Whoever one thinks of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, one always thinks of the actors made famous by their performances in the title role. Coquelin's performance in the original production of the play, which was written especially for him, was regarded as one of the great achievements of the nineteenth century. America grew very fond of the main character through the splendid performances of Walter Hampden. Between 1923 and 1936 he played the role 991 times. By comparison, Coquelin played Cyrano 927 times in Paris alone. Just after the second world war England found its Cyrano in Ralph Richardson, who, in Tyrone Guthrie's production, gave many memorable performances. Most recently Christopher Plummer (1962), Edward Woodward (1970), Frank Langella (1971) and Keith Michell (1975) have won much acclaim for their acting in the title role. However, for many people, it has been José Ferrer's performance in the 1950 film (a rather deliciously fast-paced version that accentuated the sword fights and the lack of money used to finance the project) that has made the part and the play even more well known.

Reading the reviews of the performances by these very different actors, one realises that the role of Cyrano de Bergerac, far from being a stereotype, is open to a great variety of valid interpretations, whether it be Coquelin's cultivation of the literary side of his cynically dashing character, Hampden's lovable swashbuckler, José Ferrer's strutting, sincere, but ultimately sad character, Ralph Richardson's human, witty and very English Cyrano, Plummer's wardonic poet or Langella's limped poetical character. It's easy to see that one of the most important qualities of the play is the amount of room it allows a good actor, resulting in many great performances, even if the play is not so admired. Miss Beerbohm said of Coquelin's performance in *The Smuggle Review* (1898): "Even if anyone does not like the play, it will be something, hereafter, to be able to bore one's grandchildren by telling them about Coquelin as Cyrano."



Cyrano de Bergerac in the 1950 film. 1950

CYRANO AT THE COMEDIE-FRANCAISE

Cyrano de Bergerac came into the repertoire of the Comedie-Francaise in 1938, and since then it has been performed there 854 times. Indeed, such is the popularity of the play that in the last twenty-five years only Moliere's *Dom Juan* *gentilhomme* has been presented more frequently. (In 1964 a new production by Jacques Charon received no fewer than fifty curtain calls on its opening night!) The play has become so closely associated with the Comedie-Francaise that it is now part of the tradition of that venerable institution.

IMPORTANT DETAILS

For a better understanding of the play, the following notes are useful l'Hôtel de Bourgogne.

The first Act is set in a theatre called the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The name derives from a theatre built on the site of the Paris residence of the Dukes of Burgundy (*Hôtel* as used here with the meaning of 'mansion' or 'town house'). The Hôtel de Bourgogne's role in the history of French theatre is unique. It was France's first theatre and it was here that Racine's plays were presented. Its chief rival was the Marais theatre where Corneille's *Le Cid* first played in 1636. A later rival was Molière's theatre which was established in Paris in 1658. The Comedie-Française was not founded until 1680. The general atmosphere of the Hôtel de Bourgogne was pretty much as Rostand has pictured it: a dimly lit hall, rough noisy crowds consisting of the usual theatre goers, plus thieves, drunkards, card-players and soldiers. Brawls were frequent and fencing not uncommon. Richelieu's edicts against arms in the theatre were not taken seriously.



An interior view of the Hôtel de Bourgogne (Abraham Bosse, circa 1650).

Performance Times

In 1609, by royal ordinance, it was required that in winter plays should begin at 2.00 pm and end not later than 4.30. The beginning was later moved to 3.00 pm because of the afternoon church service.

The Precious Ladies

The *precieuses* were society ladies of the time who developed a rather icy and ornate way of speaking and behaving. They generally belonged to urban and thought of themselves as knowing the secret of perfect feminine grace. They developed a self-styled mystique that blended other-worldliness, pampered fragility, artfulness and literary

pretension which resulted in them sighing over shallow literature and speaking in convoluted, ridiculous metaphors. The exaggerated but serious imitations of this mystique by provincials are ridiculed in Molière's *les Précieuses ridicules* (1659). Such feminine pseudonyms as *Barthesme* and *Félicie* used in *Cyrano de Bergerac* are very much in the tradition of the *precieuses*. Rostand's *saute* is very gentle compared with Molière's however.

Gascen oaths

In Act Two we hear the oaths, *conscience!* *Mille dieux!* *Copulédoux!* *Mordoux!* *Pocadédoux!* All are perverted forms of well known

oaths, *Serg de Dieu!* *Mille dieux!* *Mort de Dieu!* *Par la terre de Dieu!*

Arras (Act Four)

A city in the north of France. It had fallen into the hands of the Spanish in 1640. Richelieu ordered the city besieged. It capitulated after nine days and remained a part of France.

Scapin (Act Five)

The reference is to Molière's play *les Fourberies de Scapin*. This play was first performed in 1671 and not in 1655 as Rostand implies. A comparison of Molière's play (Act Two, scene 7) and *Cyrano's* *Pédant juar* (Act Two, scene 4) reveals how much the former borrowed.



Illustration from the first English edition of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. © Victor Black

The Translation by Louis Nowra

Although the original French is in rhyming alexandrines, I have tried to reproduce the couplets only in the fencing *hoké* and Cyrano's recitation of self-mock in Act One. As the occasional full rhyming translations have proved English has neither the flexibility nor the delicacy of French, and such attempts are salutary warnings that English rhyme is not only clumsy and obvious, but even when well used – especially when triple or quadruple – a *faute tour de force*. The best examples of rhyming couplets in English are those that are muffled into slant rhyme or assonance, of which there have been few masters. The real joy of this is that English cannot hope to duplicate the best feature of Rostand's play: its astonishingly beautiful use of the French language.

Panache

Panache is the last word in Rostand's play. Literally it means the plume of feathers on a hat or military helmet, or even just a tuft of feathers. The English meaning of the word is close to the figurative sense of the French. When someone is said to have *panache*, we think of them as having dash, style and sophistication. In the French, however, *panache* is a quality that also takes in courage, gallantry, independence, pride and superiority. It is this kind of *panache* that Cyrano bequeaths to poverty at the end of the play, a quality that will outwit death. In his reception speech to the Académie, Rostand defined it as "*Yvresse de bravoure*." I have kept the word *panache* in the translation in the hope that, unlike the usual academic translations which diminish the splendid resonances of the original by calling it "white plume", my usage is closer to the spirit of the original.

(Note: A delightful irony. Both the Cyrano of history and the Cyrano of Rostand's imagination were interested in astronomy and would be no doubt pleased to discover that a second definition of *panache* in English is an astronomical term meaning "a plume-like solar protuberance".)



DIRECTOR RICHARD WHERRETT

Richard was appointed in May 1979 as the Director of The Sydney Theatre Company for a three year term. In 1965 he went to England and trained at RADA, LAMDA and ELS and also worked with various repertory companies. In 1970 he returned to Australia and became Associate Director at the Old Tote Theatre Company where his productions included *The Assembly*, *King of Arona* (televised by the ABC) and *The Slave of Madia*.

He has been associated with Nimrod Theatre from its beginning in Christmas 1970 and became Co-Artistic Director in 1974. He co-directed three *Hamlet* (also televised in the ABC), Peter Handke's *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, Richard III, *Furber's Rock-abye, Henry IV* and *The Sea*. Other productions include Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* for the Old Tote Theatre Company, *Once In A Lifetime* for NIDA and *PS Your Cat Is Dead* by James Kirkwood for the Adelaide Festival Trust.

Richard directed for the Nimrod Theatre Steve J. Spears' highly successful *The Evocation of Benjamin Franklin* which has toured Australia, to London and San Francisco, and opened off Broadway in March 1979. It subsequently won OBIE's for Best Play, Best Direction and Best Actor.

Richard has just completed his first film, an adaptation of Frank McCann's *The Girl Who Met Someone In Berlin* in Paris.

JOHN BELL

John first played the title role in *Hamlet* for the Old Tote Theatre Company in 1967. He spent from 1965 to 1970 working in England mainly as an associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Back in Australia he directed the original production of *The Legend of King O'Malley* and in December of 1970 he and Ken Hooley founded Nimrod Theatre. As co-Artistic Director of Nimrod his many productions include Peter Keane's *A Man of God*, Luan Plow's *Inner Lovers*, Ron Blair's *The Christmas Brother* which after an initial tour, played a London season in 1979. David Williamson's *The Club* which has also recently concluded a very successful season in London and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *Henry And John*. His many acting roles include the title role in *The Reasonable Five*, *Old Arrows On*, *Swan in Lovers*, *Depths* for the Old Tote Theatre Company, *Hal in Henry IV*, Richard in *Richard III*, and Hatch in *The Sea* for Nimrod. He has also featured in a number of film and television roles. Most recently he has directed *The Overtones* for Nimrod.





Translation: LOUIS NOWRA

Louis is the author of the plays *Inner Voices* and *Fussan*. He also wrote the novel *The Musers Of Braun* and the documentary book *The Cheated*. Two new plays will be produced this year, *Inside The Island* in August at the Nimrod and *The Precious Women* by the Sydney Theatre Company. His other translations include *The Prince Of Homburg*.



Music: SARAH DE JONG

Sarah has written music for the plays *Inner Voices* and *Fussan* and for the One Extra Dance Group's ballet *The King Stag* (1979). Recently she wrote the music for the short films *Sh. Night* and *The Wedding*. Presently she is engaged in writing the music for *Inside The Island* and *The Precious Women*. She is also writing a commissioned full length ballet score. At present she is on a Music Board grant researching theatre music.



Lighting: KEITH EDMUNDSON

Keith Edmundson, until recently Lighting Designer and Technical Director for the Old Vic Theatre Company, formerly Prospect Theatre Company, arrived in Sydney with Toby Robertson's production of *Hamlet*. This was the third time he'd visited Australia and this time he decided to stay. He is currently lecturing in Lighting and Sound at NIDA and while he has been in Sydney has lit for Nimrod — *Butter House* and *Howe Of The Deaf Man*, for Sydney Theatre Company — *Chore Of Plot* and *No Names*, *No Pack Drill*, and at the Seymour Centre Robyn Archer's *A Star Is Torn*.



Settings: JOHN STODDART

John was born in Sydney and graduated as an architect from the University of Sydney. After working in London for several years as an architect he started to design for the theatre in 1967. Since then he has worked mainly in opera.

His work in Great Britain includes *Così Fan Tutte*, *The Marriage Of Figaro*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *The Merry Widow*, *The Tiers Of The Storm*, *The Rape Of Lucrece* and *Alexandre* for Scottish Opera, and for the English National Opera, *Pastorale*, *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni*. He has worked in the United States where for the Washington Opera he designed *L'Orlando* and for Houston Grand Opera *The Barber of Seville* and *Tosca*.

For the Australian Opera he designed *The Magic Flute* for the opening season of the Sydney Opera House and in 1973 *Arander Auf Naxos*. Also in 1973 for the State Opera of South Australia *Così Fan Tutte*.

He has been Production Designer for three Australian films, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, *Barry McKenzie Holds His Own* and *The Getting of Wisdom*. In 1979 he designed *Pastorale* for the Australian Opera, *La Clemenza Di Tito* for the Victoria State Opera and *One Man Show* and *Werther* for the State Opera of South Australia and in 1980 *L'Orlando*.



Costumes: LUCIANA ARRIGHI

Luciana has worked often with Ken Russell in television for BBC, on *Juditha*, *Rosamund* and *Rosamund* and the feature film *Women In Love* as well as *Sandra Wood*, *Sunday* for John Schlesinger. She then returned to Australia to design *The Night The Prodigal* for Jim Sherman as well as the Paris Theatre season and more recently the costumes for *Death In Venice* for the 1980 Adelaide Festival. Her latest success is *Mr. Brahms Career* which has won two design awards — the Australian Film Institute and the Sammy.



Fights: GEORGE WHALEY

George has worked as an actor and director in Melbourne and was co-founder and Associate Director with 'Red Cherry' of the Emerald Hall Theatre in South Melbourne, where he played such roles as Luther, Willy Loman, MacBeth and Sergeant Masgrave. He won the 1968 Erik Award for his performance as John Proctor in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of *The Crucible*.

He came to Sydney as a resident director of the Old Tote Theatre Company after a study tour of England, Eastern Europe and USSR. He has been Head of the Acting Course at NIDA since 1976 and has directed the NIDA Jane Street productions of *On Our Selection* which transferred to the Nimrod Theatre and *Waiting For Godot*. His most recent stage performance was in the Nimrod production of *Jaspers* at the end of 1978. He has just completed the Theatre Directors course at the Film and Television School and made a film called *Dawg*.

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ROBIN RAMSAY

Robin began what has become a life style, with Twinkles on the Elf when he was nine. In between building his house at Bega, and boats in Adelaide, he played Fagin in *Oliver* on Broadway for two years when he was 25, and went with it to London and Tokyo. The musical theatre has since presented him as Pontius Pilate in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Mack the Knife in *The Threepenny Opera* at the Opera House Opening.

His solo performance in *Barbed Wire* was acclaimed in London in 1978, and at Nimrod and Adelaide last year, also winning the Australian Arts Award. Rodney Fisher is working on another one-man show for him, *I Rode With Buffalo Bill*.

His films include *Mad Dog Morgan*, *On a Rock'n'roll road movie*, and on television, *The Ed Sullivan Show* (in 1964 with the Beatles), *Peri*, *Granger* for the BBC, *Two Girls And A Millionaire* for Thames, and *Bedfellows* by Barry Oakley, to be shown in August this year.

This is his fifth play for Richard the others being *Rock-ola*, *Married Women*, *PS Your Cat Is Dead* and *The Sun In South*.



HELEN MORSE

Helen made her first professional appearance as Jo in *A Taste Of Honey* in Jim Sharman's Cell Block Theatre production. She subsequently toured New South Wales, happily for two years with various Shakespearean plays and a second production of *A Taste Of Honey*.

A great variety of roles followed, some of her favourites are Anna Bowers in *Life In Little India* for the Independent Theatre, Lady Teazle in *The School For Scandal*, Eliza Doolittle in *Pigmalion* for the Old Tote Theatre Company, with whom she was a permanent member for one year in 1971; Nina in *The Seagull* for NIDA, and again working with Jim Sharman in *Terror Australis*—an experimental revue at Jane St Theatre, two Alex Buzz plays, Sandy in *Roomed* for Nimrod and Susan in *Toss* for the Melbourne Theatre Company. More recently at Nimrod she played Kate Haulthan in *A Fun With The Fourth* (directed by Richard Wherrett) and in Samuel Beckett's *Not I*, and for the Ensemble Theatre, Miss Sadie Thompson in *Rain*.

Film roles have included Amanda in *Stone*, Damsel the French school mistress in *Power At Hanging Rock* and the lead role of a 1920's barmaid in *Coolidge*. Helen has just completed filming *A Town Like Alice*, a television series which we can all look forward to viewing later this year.



ANDREW McFARLANE

Andrew left NIDA in 1973 and went directly into a continuing role in *Division 4* for Crawford

Productions. More recently for Crawford's he played John Sullivan in *The Sullivans* for sixteen months as well as the telemovie *The John Sullivan Story*. Also for television for the ABC he has played in episodes of *Behold The Legend* and *Certain Women* and the role of the Captain in the series *Patrol Boat*. For film he played the lead roles in the feature *Break Of Day*, and the Walt Disney production *Born To Run* and most recently in the Australian film *So Night*. He spent 1975 at the Old Tote Theatre Company and has also toured in David Williamson's *The Club* for Parachute Productions, and co-starred with Deborah Kerr in *The Day After The Fair* at the Theatre Royal.



CRAIG ASHLEY

Craig worked in 1974 with the Old Tote Theatre Company, playing in *Three Men On A Horse* and *The Chapel Perilous*. Other companies he has worked for include, the State Theatre Company of South Australia in *The Duchess of Malfi*, School for Scandal, *All My Sons* and *Men With Names* in *Reinert* and John Dowling's Theatre in Wellington, where his career started, in *Three Men On A Horse* and *Red Hare*. He has made appearances on television dramas produced by Crawford, ABC and Comedy Organisation.



JON BLAKE

Jon's career started with playing a continuing role in *The Restless Years* for the Grundy Organisation. He stayed with the production for eighteen months. He worked in the original Jane Street production of *On Our Selection* and transferred with that production to the Nimrod Theatre. He recently played a guest role in a dramatised documentary titled *Shoppers Strike* for the Tasmanian Film Corporation. On completion of the run of *On Our Selection* at the Nimrod Theatre, Jon joined the Sydney Theatre Company as a permanent member of the company, commencing with *No Name* - *No Park Deal*.



MAGGIE BLINCO

Maggie has been in several plays for Nimrod Theatre including *Summer Of The Scentedness Doll*, *The Shopgirl*, *Well Alone*, *Many More*, *Much Alike About Nothing* and *Comedies Of Errors*. Also *Cassiusian Chalk Circle* for Jane Street in the Sydney Theatre Company's interim season in 1979. *Cassiusian* for

the Old Tote Theatre Company, and *Old King Cole* for the Australian Theatre for Young People. On television she has appeared in several productions for the ABC including *Redcap* (Norman Lindsay Festival), *Asian People*, *Crisis Women*, *One Day After*, *Tinseltown* and *Chopper Squad* for the Grundy Organisation. Maggie has been in *Five Times*, *David And Phyllis*, *And More*, *Scotch Malware*, *The Night The President and The Enkhlee*.



ROBIN BOWERING

Robin trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, then in repertory for the next five years. Joined Anita Neagle and Derek Nunn in *Charlie Girl* in London. Then to Australia where he was Assistant Director on *Charlie Girl* in Melbourne and he stayed with JC Williamson a few short two years, appearing in that production of *No No Nerve* and *The Moving Season* which he also directed in New Zealand.

The next few years saw him work for the Old Tote Theatre Company intermingled with television work for the ABC and Crawford Productions. During 1976-1977 he worked on three film projects in New Zealand, one being *Dead In The Wood* by Ngata Marsh, which starred George Baker of *I Ching* fame. Robin has just spent two and a half years with the State Theatre Company of South Australia. He completed work on the feature film *The Survivor* directed by David Hemmings a few days ago.



BRANDON BURKE

After graduating from NIDA in 1976, Brandon played in the Old Tote's productions of *The Magician* and *The Alchemist*. The continuing role of Tony Moore in *Glorious High* (Channel 7) and the film *The Gold Angri* also followed with the Nimrod Theatre he appeared in *A First Week*, *The Family* and *American Buffalo* and also worked in Marian Street's *The*

Murder Room. Since joining as a permanent member of the Sydney Theatre Company, Brandon has been in *The Sunset South* and played Tiger Kelly in *No Name* - *No Park Deal*.



STUART CAMPBELL

Stuart graduated from NIDA in 1974. Amongst his film credits are *Cadillac* and *Weekend Of Shadows*. He has appeared in most Australian television series. For the Old Tote Theatre Company, Stuart played in *Four*, *The Stars*, *The Wolf*, *The Father* and for Nimrod *No Name* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Gilbert and Sullivan At The Bar*.



LINDA CROPPER

Linda went directly from school to NIDA where she graduated in 1978. In 1979 she joined The Hunter Valley Theatre Company where she played Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* and appeared in *Under Milkwood* and *The Miracle Worker*. Then back in Sydney she joined the Music Hall's production of *Love To The Deed* until January this year.



PETER FLETT

Peter has a strong background in stage and television acting and was an original member of the Samar Cruises - *Theatre On The Sea* programme touring to Japan, Hong Kong and the South Pacific. He was a member of the Melbourne Theatre Company for their twentieth anniversary season in 1973, which included *Jongens*, *Murder Coverage* and *The Time Is Now* (30 Apr). Amongst his many television roles have been Dr Woods in the original series of *Rush* for the ABC and Robson Piper in *Red Hare* also for the ABC.

He also played supporting roles in *Number 96* and *Clon of 73* along with guest appearances in most locally produced television series. Penn's appearance in *Crimo de Bergerac* is his first on the Sydney stage since his return from Iran last year.



GREG FORD

Greg commenced learning violin at the age of thirteen and two years later won a scholarship to the Conservatorium (Sydney) where until 1976 he attended the Conservatorium High School. After leaving school he spent six months working as a principal player in the Queensland Theatre Orchestra before returning to Sydney to commence the DSCM course at the Conservatorium. During the past few years he has worked as a casual in the Frobenius Trust, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Seymour Group. He hopes to work and study overseas in the near future. Greg's previous dramatic experience has been limited to the painful role of a tree in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.



IAN KENNY

Ian graduated from Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (Queensland) Performing Arts Course at the end of 1978. Since then he has travelled Australia with the *Notman Gannon* film crew for two months. Ian has appeared in *The Restless Years*, *Winter* (ABC) and *A Town Like Alice*. *Crimo de Bergerac* is his first stage role in Sydney.



WILFRED LAST

Wilfred was a founding member of Melbourne's *Prism Factory Theatre*, he has worked with the resident company

• The Australian Performing Group as actor and director over several years. Last year he appeared in the *Prism*'s production of Stephen Sondheim's *Travlers* (seen recently at Nimrod) and in *The Woman by Edward Bond*. He also acted in and directed a season of short plays by Melbourne writers Barry Duffin and Phil Motherwell, later appearing in and directing English writer Howard Brechin's bitter satire of personal relations *Love Throat*.



BILL MCCLUSKEY

Bill was born in Scotland in 1950. He arrived in Australia in 1955 and studied theatre arts at the West Australian Institute of Technology. Then came a move to Sydney where he trained at NIDA, graduating in 1978. Since leaving NIDA, Bill has spent a season with the Salamance Theatre Company in Tasmania. Other companies he has worked with include the Griffin Theatre Company in *Roths on the Snow* and Sydney University Theatre Workshop in *Strawberry* directed by Rex Cranphorn. He has made appearances in television dramas produced by Lyle McCabe Productions, Grundy Organisations, the ABC and we can look forward to his appearance in two films: *Man On The Edge Of The Forest* and *Margaret*.



PHILIP PARR

Philip was a first year art student at Sydney University. His performed as an actor and musician and has composed for university and school productions. He sang as treble for the Australian Ballet in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and for the ABC production of Massenet's opera *Werther*. He performed the music for SAUDS production of David Har's *Foramen* and for *Strawberry* by Ransom for Sydney University Theatre Workshop. Philip plays violin, viola, recorder, flute, percussion, zambomba and lute.



VIC ROONEY

Newcastle born and bred, Vic came to theatre predominantly through productions at the University of Newcastle, New Theatre and more recently with The Hunter Valley Theatre Company where he has played a variety of roles including Father O'Connor in *A Happy And Holy Christmas*, Claudius in *Hamlet*, Jim in *Flamenco* and Frank in *Traveling Light*. In 1978 he was a member of the company formed by John Tucker to present the Peter Keane trilogy *The Cousins* at the Adelaide Festival. He has also worked as a television, reporter and critic on theatre. Film credits include *Cash's Child* and *The Journey*.



JOHN SHEERIN

John began his acting career through his association with the Green Room Society while studying Drama at the UNSW, performing in such plays as *Norma Rae*, *Murphy's Law*, *Les Garçons*, *Shoe and Sand*. He worked with the Seymour Centre Theatre Workshop in *Pierre Corneille's Theatrical Museum* directed by Rex Cranphorn. Then followed the *Lady Of The Camellias* for the Para Theatre Company, *The Sea* at the Nimrod then *No Names No Park*. Draft for the Sydney Theatre Company. Interim appearances his theatre work have been appearances on television in *Number 96*, *Young Doctors*, *Love Throat*, *Neighbour* and the soon to be seen ABC series *Spring And Fall* and on film in *The Journalist*, *Now And Then* and *The Girl Who Met Simone De Beauvoir In Paris* directed by Richard Wherrett.



ALAN TOBIN

Alan started his career by training at

The plays he has staged for the Edinburgh Trust, *So Snow, The Native Island*, *San Vencido*, *Black Auto Abolish*, *Shanghai*, for Marian Street, *For Tami*, *Table for Queensland Theatre Company*, *Blacks*, *Corpus* and the recently completed run of *Plays*, *Oh The House*, *Black!* for the Melbourne Theatre Company, *Therapeutic*, *Quere*, *Orpheus*, *Descending* and for the Old Time Theatre Company, *Canamun*, *Chad*, *Circle*, *The Akkadian* and the part of *King* in *The Merchant*. Recent television appearances included the ABC award-winning *Tig* Miniseries.



George studied acting technique under Brian Sykes. He spent four years in the South Australian Theatre Company under the Artistic Director George Ciprien, studying especially working with George Ciprien, Rodney Fisher and Helmut Bakula. Of particular joy was creating the role of John in the world premiere of David Williamson's *The Apprehensions*, playing Smiley the Lion in Louis Esson's *Shake of Gypsy Play*, Bill Walker in Sharr's *Myer Sackner* and working with John Stride in *Caribbeana*.



Andrew failed first year Arts (including Drama) in 1974, so he decided to study acting in England. He says he spent a year in South America by which time he couldn't afford the airfare home, so he remained in Australia via Peru where he worked for four months to finance his return through Asia. On arrival in Australia he appeared on several successful productions for SUDP at Sydney University (the auditioned for the Sydney Theatre Company and was given a twelve month contract, which is still the best played roles in *The Tempest*, *Scotch*, *Close CR Five* and *No Menor*). *No Bad Deal*.



Robert was born of good Dutch New England stock. He was awarded the 1937 Winthrop Australian Comedy Best Actor Award for his performance. He played John Joseph Foster in *MMS Peebles* in *James in Long Day's Journey into Night*, then Marlowe, Edward in *Daughters* in the Fresh-Fruit production of *Chamberlain*. He has appeared opposite Richard Todd in *Angels*, Tom Brooke-Taylor in *Hi Fi Patrol*, Bob Grant in *No Sex Please, We're British* and Robert Morley in *The Old Country*.



repertory on the West End, marriage brought her to Western Australia where she appeared in many productions; from pantomime to Noel Coward.

A move to Sydney led to various roles in theatre and television - most recently appearing in *Class A Criminals* at the Theatre Royal and *Lois To The Death* at the Music Hall and in the not yet released television series *A Town Like Alice*.



Paul is one of our most versatile actors. His career has taken a diverse route from NIDA to ABC Radio to all forms of theatre on his own and more recently film where he has won high accolades for his role of Uncle Luke. "I'll be in My Mother's House

He has just returned from Melbourne, after filming the role of C. Skallstrom in the television production of *Sydney* (Loek). Elliott's next roles start: *Wages* (Lark) and *The Reader*.

Some of the high spots in Pater's career include leading roles in *Redeem Me*, *It Happened This Spring*, *The Call*, *And the Winner Is*, and *Applauders' Last Reviews Character* for the Old Time Theatre Company. He was also in the Manhattan Struts production of *It Ain't the Way You Do It*, *The Fishtrap Ship and Time for a Fight*. One among others and last year directed *The Wonder House* and *The Champion* there. He has also just completed the musical *Fun For Love*. Pater is in the radio, cinema and theatre. He appeared in *The Academy Of Heavenly Musicians* and *The House of Richard Wagner* for the Music Hall of the Millionaire Theatre Company's production of *Academy of Authors* and the Queensland Theatre Company's *Radio Garden*. Pater is also well remembered for his roles of Peter Pan in the ABC television series *For Mankind*, a *Robin Hood* and *King Lear* in the same director as the last.

OPERA



BY ROY BAKER
EDITOR

Performances in Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney

The public release, early in June, of the report of the Australia Council inquiry into opera and music theatre threatened for a time to provoke the same sort of hysterical and unproductive response that generated the 1977 Industries Assistance Commission report into the performing arts.

Seemingly, as vision of the opera scene in this country half-way through the current decade descended to a remarkable degree with any view as expressed in the December 1979 issue of *Theatre Australia*, particularly as to the most vital problems of all: how to service adequately the operatic needs of Sydney and Melbourne without imposing a greater financial burden on the community than it is prepared to tolerate.

In view of all the noise made in the relevant quarters in recent weeks, it seems likely that the report of the Australia Council inquiry will be embraced with relative warmth and that steps will be taken to implement it with relative dispatch. But inevitably there will be difficulties, and some of the most potentially controversial of them had begun to surface with the days of public release of the report.

On the Australian Opera side of the fence, it was being said that the timetable for proposed change was too condensed, that the future level of funding proposed for the AO was so inadequate as to invite artistic disaster, that anyhow commitments had already been made for 1981 and beyond that were all but impossible to alter even now.

South of the border, down Melbourne way, they were also grumbling about the inadequacy of proposed funding, even in the first flush of triumph that they had been given exactly what they had demanded — prime of place for the VSO in the new arts

venue, justified with an astronomical projected rate of growth in the number of its performances — from 27 in Melbourne this year to 137 in 1985, an increase of no less than 401 per cent.

And while one would scarcely wish to dismiss the AO's arguments out of hand, or to suggest for a moment that the artistic confidence so consistently stirred forward so often achieved over the past few years should lightly be compromised, it could scarcely be denied that Melbourne is likely to be the focal point of operatic problems in the years immediately ahead, or that as a result its grumbling deserve greater attention than the squawks of the AO.

Exclusively a stagione company, to date mounting sporadic brief seasons of specialist works well removed from the heartland of the standard repertory, the VSO will have to convert itself into something approaching a repertory ensemble almost overnight and build up a library of stock favorites to fulfil the demands of an apparatus whetted by regular, substantial seasons from the AO over the past decade. In so doing, it will of necessity be catering for far more knowledgeable and demanding patrons than the AO had to contend with during its formative years, for that company was blessed with the luxury of being able to grow along with its audience.

Clearly, the VSO is going to need every friend and every bit of expertise it can muster if it is to duplicate, or surpass, the impressive AO Opera House saga most importantly, now that the die seems to

have been cast wisely at the master plan level, it must actively rebuild its bridges to and links with the Australian Opera.

Neither party has been glibless in the underlying rivalry that has ebbed and flowed across the Murray River in recent years, but nothing could be more stupid than to dwell on the rights and wrongs of past antagonisms now. The AO must gracefully return to the position of national operatic elder statesman, willingly extending whatever help it can to its younger, less well endowed brethren, the VSO has no need to gloss over its victory in the skirmish for possession of the new arts centre lest it crash ignominiously when the curtain is ready to go up there. The time is all too short.

Meanwhile, back where it matters most, on stage — this was also an exciting month featuring a quite good *Don Pasquale* in Adelaide, an intriguing revival of *The Pearl Fishers* in Melbourne as well as a new production of *The Abduction of Hecuba*, a fascinating *Traviata* in Perth and a night of vocal ecstasy in Sydney.

This last was provided by the new Australian Opera production of Verdi's little-known *I Masnadieri*, featuring Johnutherland, Donald Smith, Robert Allman and Clifford Grant in the major roles. Not to mention some rousing singing from the male chorus and some finely articulated jump-jump-too accompaniment from the Elisabeth Sydney Orchestra under the baton of Richard Boneygas.

It was planned to be the Australian



Donald Smith as Carlo, Johnutherland as Amelia in *I Masnadieri*. Photo: Peter Bortol.

premiere season of Verdi's 11th opera (premiered in 1847, immediately after *Macbeth* and four years before the spectacular middle period run of great collaborations with *Agrippina*), and even while admiring its musical virtues it is easy to see why the work has failed to hold the world's stages.

Indeed, it is considerable tribute to producer Peter Morrison and set designer Allan Lee, that they managed to maintain a kind of dramatic continuity throughout the nine scenes of the piece, as time — if not, unfortunately always — coping quite handsomely with the problem of the plot's (inbuilt) dependence and incredibility.

Il Moro di Venezia literally bubbles over with superbly crafted operatic music: exciting arrangerment supplemented with cabaret-style duets, ensembles and choruses abound with a profusion that amazes. Yet it is only one deep, the music never touches the heart or comments on the human condition in the way that great Verdi, like all great opera, does.

The characters are sketched deftly, but the details are never filled in satisfactorily. In Act I Scene 1 the action never handsomely turns beyond when he lying hand of a brother falsely accuses him he has been dishonoured. In Act I Scene 2, the man lying hand of a handsome brother (All may) bears his revolting soul.

In Act I Scene 3, the aged hero of a father (Grand) is nearly dispatched to the next world by false news of his next son's death, and the next character of all, his niece Annina (Sutherland) has admirable opportunities to display her vocal agility.

As the evening progresses, ensembles and choruses proliferate along with the implausibilities of the plot until the next happens things himself and the next terror stabs the next more (whom all cosmic he loved) in the back to save her from the late worse than death of further association with him and his band of brigands.

It's the sort of Verdi worth staging now, and again if you're the voices to manage it with voice and style, and the AD does it was a fine work for this year's gala Opera House extravaganza to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Australian Opera under that name as well as the stage debut of Sutherland and Smith in the new opera.

In Perth, the month's debut was of the spectacularly remodelled His Majesty's Theatre, a \$10 million enterprise that has produced an exciting new lease of life for an old venue. The opera was one of the unexceptional Verdi prizes. For *Il Moro*, the performance I saw unfolding for its ensemble strengths, though seriously wanting in direction and to some extent, design.

Under the reliable baton of Gerald Knag, who has just been appointed musical director of the Western Australian Opera

Company on a permanent basis, the WA Arts Orchestra played impressively and the WA Opera Chorus made some very pleasing sounds indeed.

So too, for that matter, did the three central soloists — Margaret Haggart as Violetta, Gino Zanantoni as Alfredo and Corrado De Munch as Germont père.

Similarly, Graham Mackinnon set designs were consistently pleasing to look at, if admittedly conjuring up an atmosphere more historic than creative of the environs of Paris, where the opera is supposed to be set.

More problematical was some of his costuming, particularly the totally graceless and unflattering gown reflected on Haggart for her first entrance. Her role a difficult shape, but not an impossible one to deal with — and well worth the trouble, in view of her vocal attributes: her good deal more care needs to be taken than was on the occasion of the 10 to have any hope of portraying convincingly a heroine ill from the cancer and destined to die of consumption.

But by far the most serious general



Corrado De Munch (Left) and Gino Zanantoni (Right) in *Il Moro di Venezia*

faulting of this *Traviata* was the direction of Giuseppe Bernasconi, which often seemed on the brink of degenerating into no direction at all. It almost seemed that characters and principals alike had been told to do their own thing — with the predictable result that only very sporadically did the result rise above rather aimless wandering about and convey the abundant drama contained in one of the finest concertos of the standard repertoire.

More assertive direction could have prevented the characters from looking as if they had wandered on stage by accident in the middle of their choral practice, could have made Haggart's Violetta a coherent character rather than a series of vignettes, some effective and some not, could even have coaxed some dramatic involvement

out of the wooden stage personality of Zanantoni. In this area, the only deserving principal was De Munch — but then, of course, the older Germont is a rather unbending character anyhow and the acting demands of the role are as a result not very great.

Now and then Haggart demonstrated some real flair for acting — notably in her last brief outburst of energy and song before accepting quite spectacularly dead as Alfredo's last. Effective direction could have maintained that level of dramatic tension almost throughout — and the result could well have been a most memorable *Traviata* indeed.

State Opera's *Don Pasquale* in Adelaide, which came on the way back from Perth was most memorable — to wit, at least — for a rather spectacular *Scenes* from *Il Trovatore*, a finely wrought *Macbeth* from Roger Howell and some outstandingly longwinded from Thomas Edmond's *Il Trovatore*.

Designer producer Tam Leungwood was totally successful in the first least of his dual assignments, but less so as director, particularly in coping with the total character of Pasquale himself, which is after all the fulcrum about which the entire action of the opera must pivot.

Pasquale must be a good deal more than a mere buffoon, as he was played in this production by Grant Dickson, but that to be sure much of the time he is generally hurt by some of Norma's pretensions after they are "married" just as she is generally touched when she perceives his blustering exterior and catches the occasional glimpse of the human being within.

For it is, of course, these occasional glimpses of the human rather than those of an audience to realise that Norma is more than a hard-hearted calculating bitch, and that Pasquale is more than a buffoon and a dirty old man. It was a particular pity that this important aspect of the drama was neglected in what was otherwise generally an excellent *Don Pasquale*.

During the period under review the Victoria State Opera was mounting two productions, in seasons that almost overlapped but not quite. The first was a rather marvellous realisation of Monteverdi's *The Return of Ulisses*, featuring winning performances from Margreta Fikini as Penelope and Greg Dempsey in the title role, the second, a revival of the much-acclaimed VSO *Pearl Fishers* of 1979, which was also seen at the Sydney Opera House during this year's summer season.

The Monteverdi was a remarkable all-round achievement, with particular credit due to Anne Fikini's gloriously simple design and Robin Langley's straightforward direction — not to mention



Richard Dwyer as Francisco in *Macbeth*. Photo: Bruce Sand

Richard Dwyer's expertly praised performing voice, which can come from the animal laugh and the heightened dramatic impact as well as musical accessibility.

The Pearl Fishers, featuring Edwina Hackett as Lola this time round, and Ian Collins as Zurga and Neil Warren-Smith as Nourah, retained only Keith Lewis' Nourah from its two original incarnations, but was musically more refined than ever.

The production itself wasn't too well, despite John Tinscott's master design stroke: the huge stage buried up to its nose in the earth for the sacred place of Act II. In Act II it is claustrophobic and the purported scaling of the temples to the curved temple unsurprising, and the decorum is rather visually feeble.

But the evening was universally glorious, and both productions were convincing triumphs for Dwyer whose stature is growing by leaps and bounds along with the artistic aspirations of the VSO. Even if the much-repeated aim of the company to attract Sir Charles Mackerras as musical director is realised within the next few years, clearly there will always be room for such a resident conducting talent as Dwyer's within the big-time VSO of the mid-80s and beyond.

DAVID CROOK is editor of *Sydney Australia*.

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FILM



BY IAN LATIMER
EDITOR

The Sydney Film Festival

Familiarity breeds fear for the Film Festival, as for most things, a certain (mild) contempt, and I do not remember any of the last two or so Festivals that did not elicit the comment that it wasn't "cooling" or at least as "exciting" as the one before. I think I have mentioned before that some combination of twenty or more years who can be found when the lights go up denouncing the actors or complaining that the director was obsessed with the opening and closing of doors, as indeed many of them are. It may be that the Sydney Film Festival, in any year, is the one you love to hate.

There was a certain amount of bad luck connected with 1980. As David Stratton said from the stage: "Don't hate me, but the people who break their word or despise the film too late." Bernard Blier's *Before Frost* (Cold Creek) had to be postponed from the French night onto an afternoon later in the week. Apparently by the Japanese director Kurosawa never got there, nor did *Winter Blood*, from the novel by Henry O'Connor with John Houston. The Festival should probably not have started with *The Fog*, nor ended with *Chloe Beaudin*. The audience laughed, with justification, at both. *The Fog* was straight marginal release, and *Chloe Beaudin*, an Australian film, just pulling in August.

It was at least a Festival of fine documentaries, and the best of these, possibly the best film of the entire two weeks - but who is going to see it besides subscribers, the patron of distribution and the convention of showing only festival features being what they are? - was *Dear Bob*, 100 minutes of riveting viewing, the film by Ira Wohl about his cousin Phil which won the 1980 Academy Award for the best documentary. By all the rules the subject - the life and times of a rounded individual, 32 years old with the mind of a

child of love - should have been awful, probably mawkish, certainly depressing. Far from it. *Dear Bob*, once the word got around, would fill cinemas.

The other documentaries of note were *Some Bloods Ask*, the 45-minute *Final Semester* that provoked it, *Hanging for Phil*, *The Man You Love To Hate*, *The Whiskies* and *We Are The Gunmen*. *Some Bloods Ask* is a filmed account of some smart talk and back passing (with a modicum of wit, sincerity and bravado) between Germanic G-men, Diana Trilling, Jacqueline Cotelion and Jill Johnson with Norman Mailer in the chair. The debate took place in 1971 but the film was explicitly not completed by the makers, Chris Hegedus and DA Pennebaker, until 1979 when it made it to the London and Edinburgh film festivals. Mailer raged fairly well until Jill Johnson's marvellous speech ran over her allowed ten minutes at the mike and he tried to haul her off stage. She was rescued by John in a moment in an hilarious free for all. The colours and sound and diction were all terrific, but it was an exasperatingly entertaining 35 minutes.

Final Semester, made in Britain, was about the results of cosmetic breast surgery as undertaken by Ruth for seduction, and Sue for enlargement. It was quite horrific in other words, an Avicci Warring. *Hanging for Phil* was by Michael Walby, a Festival winner, an Australian working in Canada. It was a phlegmatic account of what happened to Rubbo, a politician named Tony Smallwood and a millionaire named Gerald Stirling as they hung about Havana waiting to see Fidel Castro.

The Man You Love To Hate, 90 minutes on Erich von Stroheim, was probably of

interest more to cinema critics and those members of the industry who go to Film Festivals of such coast. *The Whiskies* was a history of the IWW (International Workers of the World) labour movement. *We Are The Gunmen* Pigs on the aftermath of the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island and is the first film by Joan Harney, better known as an actress.

Despite Bertolucci's *La Luna* and Bernard Blier's sturdy *Before Frost* (Cold Creek) the outstanding feature film of the Festival was undoubtedly *The Tin Drum*, adapted by Volker Schlöndorff from the novel of the same name published by Gunter Grass twenty years ago. Readers will remember that Oskar who played the red and whose drum incessantly as well as celebrating a person that could shatter spectacles, workplaces and the face of a flouting church clock decided that if he could not climb back into his mother's womb he would at least stay put at the age of three, and somehow managed it. The enormous difficulties of making such a film, or indeed finding someone to play Oskar, were overcome by Schlöndorff. The film is amazing, clever and cold as the steel that whips Darius in winter.

David Bennison, a physically started but mentally alert German boy of twelve, was an astonishing talent. plays Oskar in this grim farcicle, inadvertently or by design leading adults to their destruction. There is a good deal of sex in *The Tin Drum*, but little love. The only tender scene occurs when Oskar and Roswitha Hagena, a proxy child to whom he becomes attached when rescued from the SS by a troop of circus magicians, share a glass of wine aboard a truck as they trundle off to safety. *The Tin Drum* is a parade of grotesqueness, a nightmare in the Truemanian rather than the Italian pattern of Fellini.

Beside it the other films were also-mans, though many are well worth seeing if they go commercial. This does not apply to *La Luna* which is really quite silly and may have done irreparable damage to Jill Clayburgh's career.

Among those worth the effort are *Chloe Beaudin* by Elodie Chateau, Francesco Rosi, *The Teapots*, (UK, David Jarman), two Indian films, *Jannam* by Shyam Benegal and *The Elephant God*, by Sarvag Ray in comic mood, *Love on the Run*, Francesco Truffa reminding himself of his first director Antonio D'Amico, *The Gervaise* by Tony Luruchi, about Ulster, with a poor beginning and end but a fine middle. *Angi Vera* (Pai Gaber, Hungary), *Mobile Age Spread* (John Reed, NZ), *Heartless* (Richard Pearce, US).



David Bennison as Oskar in *The Tin Drum*

Film Festival Shorts

On stage at the first night of the Sydney Film Festival to receive a Greater Union Organisation's \$1 000 award for the best documentary, David Bradbury took the opportunity to plead for collective distribution of Australian short features. In fact it can't be said too often distribution is the big gun for shorts. Very few of the films looked at by the judges for GAO. Tom Cowan, Barbara Groomack, John Harriman, Linda Blagg, Sam Haffmann, James Ricketson, John Darnel, Peter Oliver and David Williamson, in the three categories of documentary, general and fiction, and in their capacities as writers, film makers, producers and critics will be seen by audiences in commercial cinemas. Of the twelve which were viewed by professionals and public on Friday June 15 half a dozen would justify inclusion in a "commercial" program and would give relief from the usual advertisements disguised as what used to be called trailers, and adequate support for feature films, whether local or imported.

But David Bradbury and all the rest of the local makers of short film are up against it. They suggest that the push should come from the AEC and the State corporations, and they are probably right. The time must be about due for the application of a bit of power, muscle, blackmail whatever it should be called. Public money is being used and the public should be given a look at the product.

This year's winners were Bradbury's *Frontier*, Mark Foster's *Death of a Man* and Di Drew's *Death of a Man*. The Rouben Mamoulian Award, judged overseas by the voting film people, went to Brian McKinnon's *Wives of Harvey*.

Frontier is the film that people know most about. It consists of a discontinuous interview with the remarkable Neil Davis, a Tasmanian cinematographer and reporter who filmed the Vietnam war for Vietnam and other agencies for ten years, almost against his better judgment, and with short odds on survival. He filmed, not with the Americans or Australians but with the South Vietnamese then in Kampuchea, and finally in Saigon for the surrender. He is committed, highly skilled, intense and brave. David Bradbury used Davis talking. Davis's film and archival film and it is a splendid fifty-five minutes. It was financed by the Tasmanian Film Corporation and personally and looks like paying off in European sales.



Judy Morris and Tony Heward-Jones in *The Girl Who Was Harvey's Sister*, or *Harvey's Sister*.

Mark Foster's *Death of a Man* is more minutes long and is almost a one-man job of production direction, scripting, editing and sound. It falls into that class of film which depicts in a rather fancy way the disillusionment of the young with unemployment, or drugs, or love and reminds a seasoned viewer of many of its kind.

Frontier is about a mother-daughter relationship, directed by Di Drew with Robyn News (which gives it a head start) and Natalie Bale. Its gloom is unqualified but gloom is endemic in such a subject. All four of the *Golden Globes* came from the film and television school.

Other finalists in the twelve were *Pers and Noodles* (Barbara Chubbuck), *Please Don't Leave Me* (Stephen Ramsey), *Harvey's Sister* (Brian McKinnon), *A Face of Goodness* (Michael Kanglandis), *Harvey's Sister* (Carol Jernick), *Change* (Klaus Jener), *Death of Television* (Mark Lewis), *Guns & Sins* (Richard Michaluk), *The Girl Who Was Harvey's Sister* or *Pers* (Richard Wherrett).

It could be said of *Death of Television* that it was a funny idea that didn't come off, or *Guns & Sins* that it was very debily acted by Kate Fitzpatrick, John Howard, Emma Foster and Marion Johns, that *A Face of Goodness* was interestingly photographed by Michael Kanglandis, who also directed, that *Change* was a marvel of colour and technical tricks, that *Pers and Noodles* was bleak and affecting,

and that *Wives of Harvey* was perhaps somewhat influenced by *Poker Face*.

Had I been handing out the GAO awards I would have given the documentary to *Please Don't Leave Me*. Because it was a real all-embracing director's film with three fully explored stories, it handled non-professionals and what is much more tricky, small children entering a hospital for surgery with great ease. Even to attempt the subject requires guts, good will, imagination and expertise, and to bring it off as an exercise and at the same time make it entertaining was in relative terms a creative triumph.

I don't think I would have made an award at all in the general section going to *Change* for its philosophy as well as its technical excellence.

In the twelve I found *The Girl Who Was Harvey's Sister* or *Pers* beguiling for its script from his own story by Frank Moorhouse about a man in the person of Tony Heward-Jones, allied with a touch too much of traditional women's lib from Judy Morris and Anna Vahla. The script is full of middle-class jokes, the ambience accurately depicted and the characters and pace measured. Heward-Jones may be the typical Moorhouse man or at least actor. Wherrett had Heward-Jones' style, which sometimes degenerates into parody in check and indeed an elegant shapenose of stark comic syndrome, of Judy Morris and Anna Vahla.

DANCE



BY WILLIAM
SHARP BRIDGE

Monkeys and Programme 3

When Dan Asker's *Monkeys in Motion* was produced for the Australian Ballet Book in 1977 many members of the AB audience, hand in with a passion. That was only to be expected. Others like myself went at least apprehensive about the work because it was such a welcome thought of fresh air after the suffocating mundanity of the repertoire that surrounded it.

Asker's reputation had preceded him in Australian dance circles. He had choreographed for the Ngadjirlands Dance Theatre amongst others, and the Australian "caper-dance" still walking from a porcupine cultural orange immediately thought that this had unbridled greatness upon Asker.

However it does not necessarily follow. The policy of the British company had always been to encourage, indeed demand that its dancers try and their choreographic abilities within the company.

It is a policy that gets men works performed generates into anyone talent and doesn't cost as much as importing an outside choreographer. The NDI demands almost too new works a year for its reputation. In fact, one's work performed by the NDI is an achievement for a choreographer looking for a bit of European exposure, but it is hardly something to plan a career upon.

When I first saw *Monkeys in Motion* I remarked on the freshness of its approach and the plumpness of its ideas as well as the unobtrusiveness of its staging. A *Life-Sizes* Margaret Mead mosh-mash about role playing, territory ownership and sexual aggression. Then Asker created *Monkeys in Motion* for the Sydney Dance Company, an interminable, baroque shuffling from natural one of the same landscape. I thought he had played out his hand thus far and would show the art for a while, his head and back at different

Concepts

Apparently Mr Asker knows subjects, and more. Having his men (Canberra based) Human Venus Dance Company, he has created a full length expression of his observations entitled *The Four of the Month* (Haven't passed as from the *Beastie in the Canyon* of the *Monkeys* or maybe *Monkeys* *Revenge*).

The main reason why this form of the *Monkeys* appears so much is that Asker uses, and time, again draws our attention and interest and then goes all out. The various strands in his (admittedly, mostly) before are, are able to be discovered at the moment for one case, meeting itself and creation of grounds. That laughter has a tangential flow in Asker's heart is not up there and low (with such a small number) a couple of working, thinking, sales and then the whole, monkey, view of life with down to being neighbourly.

If this first act is all about the life of the monkey, the programme itself is a programme, more an independent in this sense of post-modern dance than one, can appreciate the vibrant reader and needs to impress that are, are, constant with growing up.

But then Asker gets on, or moves, in both and everything falls apart (a final of varied gyro, discomposure, dancing).

Much the same occurs in Act 2 where one form (the Asker might prove as the original, related, uncomprehending, and

alienated from an inner society that he either comes with failed ideas or total indifference). The final of movement in this act is perhaps not a piece with a truly *Salvador* or *Salvador*, but it does have a drawing, cumulative attraction. The falling, dislocated dances and slow, perpetual walks seem to add and then naturally out of the narrative.

But then we get a show of the things with a Greek family (perhaps with *Chianti* bottle-up parents, having a sort of knees up and slowly drawing our head into their jolts). On with some more gyro, discomposure, dancing. The final moments have the entire cast lung, leaping, and perched on a beach, while Paul Coppins, some "swelling" something of practically everything. *Monkeys* ends, into its minimal, running, machine, pieces, into the room, and one last have their photos taken.

I did not want to be in the form of the *Monkeys* because it was impossible to watch it. Not only is it unwatched, it is difficult to watch, but it is not the same as watching, it is in the strong, *Headman* manner. Asker is always holding on, and breaking the third, and I suspect it is because he doesn't trust his own powers of expression and therefore walks, or in the audience's head, or in the

Perhaps it is just a little bit of the same



William Sharp: The first of the *Monkeys* for the Sydney Ballet

with an idea can into a pronounced full evening's work, music, the end, it's up to the dancers, or more probably the choreographer, to give to grips with the different necessities of full length dance works - necessities different in both manner and kind from those of a single act work.

Quince Murphy in his ballet *Paganini* didn't solve many of those logistic problems either although he did have a brace staff. In the later work *Romance*, he opted for a very cutting mix of pure abstraction and full length narrative, a narration of certain aspects of Sydney life.

In the latest revival of the work, there are some small changes made, primarily for convenience: first time, but something that could be said to be a great departure from what was performed last year. To my mind, Mr Murphy has it all fixed and doesn't in the least think of it as a "work in progress". Anyway, even some of the greatest masterpieces of dance have been changed or cleaned up by their choreographers (Balanchine for example) always at it, but this doesn't stop the pieces from looking finished at whatever point or moment. Being it again almost nine months later is an education. There are things in *Romance* that seem to appear subliminally from out of its texture, the groupings and falls in *Romance 2* for example or the sick little reference to Nijinsky's *Jeux* in the night scene scene were were from *Romance 1*.

The Lady Jane Beach scene is as knotty edged and self-explanatory as ever a welcome example of the dance giving us the story (and not even the dance at times, just a gesture is all we need to grasp the point). The whole revival of *Romance* retains that clarity of form and elegance it did last year. The last part takes a lot more endurance and concentration to be sure but the arrangement of its elements and the form it is given does us in an admirable.

Mixed alongside the final programme of *Daphne and Chloe* and the rest, *Romance* adds inordinately to Mr Murphy's distinction.

However, enough as they are, enough, and it was the work for Paganini 4 that saved the dances from becoming the Quince Murphy Dance Company.

Paul Saliba, Barry Moreland and Joseph Seigrist here that gave us a not unwelcome change of style. Paul Saliba's new work *Amoris* is his version for the SDC. His first, *And Two Came Two* was performed only a few times at the Festival of Sydney Dance work in 1976. The present work is a progression on the first, but only by virtue of an expanded and enriched form for expression.

There is a lot of serious energy in Saliba's ballet and all of it contained or put to good use. It gives a lot of the time the

energy just out from the shoulder and the torso and the complicated partnerships become in the end just a matter of leverage rather than poetic evocation.

But it does give Jennifer Barry ample opportunity to show and expand herself in a form different in manner from the more classically based style of Murphy.

Miss Barry is one of the major assets of the SDC. One can always "read" what she does on stage. She doesn't tell herself, just what she is dancing and that is an ability I wish every dancer had. It would make looking at a dance so much more engaging and enjoyable.

What Paul Saliba and Rose Phillip did on the work was barely to set in a contrast and fall for Barry, seeing she has the Precious Earth Mother figure. There



Jennifer Barry, Rose Phillip and Paul Saliba in *AMORIS* (above), *Phases* (below) taken

was nothing particularly unique or individual about the movements given them - it was largely preparatory and introductory, yet all dancers moved as if they knew what they were dancing about and why. All Mr Saliba should do is really look at his own work as an audience and ask himself why such and such a thing is done as it is, then all of those gloriously honoured Graham vapourisations will be dispelled with.

Saliba is a very musical choreographer and his choice of score Arthur Honegger's *Symphony for Strings* was daring and appropriate. I wish I could say the same thing about the costumes "let" and costumes by Robert Owen.

Barry Moreland's *Daphne* opened up with two women circling each other in leaping Edwardian dresses with boules. I thought we were in for another bout of the heavy, meaningless, which swells and up as lightweight and meaningless. But again this was only an introduction, a manner of gently, so to speak, so that when both

women ran off into the wings and returned very dressed, we could see a scorching mixture of crossness and action that lay subdued under a calm and restrained surface.

It's a sorry idea of course, and Mr Moreland's baller is high class ones, but that bright sunlight of rich, named and deftly patterned dancing that bursts out from behind a cloud of posing and gesture gives the whole work a hit that it wouldn't have really had it both women had come out in their lights and just gone straight into it.

There is a lot of unseen dancing in this work, unseen leaps, unseen lying and grappling on the floor, unseen turning about themselves, but there are reflections and variations that keep the attention oriented, apart from the dramatic edge the piece is given when performed by Jennifer Barry and Janet Worthen, probably the most impressive and dynamic female dancers in the SDC.

At the ballet's end, the music to quarter movement in *A Minor* by the young Gustav Mahler with back down into the labyrinthous tones of its opening and the women, started once more in their Edwardian dresses circle each other sit and pose with those same won, drawn faces. They had no terms. So vibrant and alive has been our last two minutes or so of observation that we are left knowing a little more about why they are so and we care a little about them for being so.

Not once could I recall one about anyone or anything that was going on in Joe Scoppio's *Amoris* so in the *Phases* and *Amoris* by Claude Debussy is more certainly a sustained, finished even and most of the time the dancers are doing the same sort of rigorous and repetitive hard stretch to each other. It seems quite a bit of this, still of dance performed by the Australian Dance Theatre, and quite frankly it was then a lot better this provision, team work stuff. The sole roles may have of Saliba's ballet in the extended past de deus but Rose Phillip and Susan Barling, a lovely slapping, sloping, soft turn and held sort of duct, but then it gets swamped with more rushing so and fro.

It reminded me the pas de deux that is of Scoppio's earlier work, *Amoris*, which he originally set for himself and his wife Julia Blake. That was, far more potent, because every movement seemed to have been thought about and used for a dance and dramatic purpose. Perhaps Scoppio is much better at looking closely at the small scale rather than directing platoons of dancers, but whatever it is, *Amoris* was danced without any conviction or are, as answers to, in fact, the same remained truly and the poem stayed dead.

THEATRE/ACT



STAGE LEFT:
MARGARET WEIK
WRITES

Australian Drama Festival

MR JACK, YOU JILL
THE 700,000

By Marguerite Weik

Mr Jack, You Jill directed by The Agony Company, Sydney and produced by Peter Williams, May and October 1979.

Cast: Robert Menzies, 1 female character, Vera Pagan, Michael White, Laura Todd.
(The 700,000 by John Ramerel is a full discussion with the Agony Company, October June 21, 1980)

Director: Jim Blackburn

Cast: Ed, Vera Pagan, Stage, Michael White, Vera, Vera Todd, 1, Ralphy Menzies, Muggs and 1979, 1 female character.

(Whole scene)

Last year the Agony company, with their new director, Peter Williams produced a play about the troubling scenes of The Hand in the Redness for the school holidays. They seemed to be testing their way with three new actors out of a company of five new director and new administrative staff. Then in October, Mr Jack, You Jill had its first public performance and it was very clear indeed that they had found their way. The Godfather's twenty-year conditioning plan to turn all Jacks into heroin addicts and all Jills into pornography-beds in a giant Chicago gang conspiracy, complete with black shirts, white ties and playing guns.

This is a TIE piece and an extremely successful one which has grown and has become lighter, softer, blacker and funnier since its opening. It worked beautifully as a piece of straight adult theatre at the Festival of Australian Drama and won the award for best director, and deservedly glowing praise to best from Malcolm Robertson the adjudicator (See article on the Agony Company in this issue). In the classroom it introduced students to ideas they have obviously never grappled with before.

The Godfather's Conditioning Agents have taken a leaf out of Sade's novel's book, and are working quite hard in schools to

correct in this generation the slip ups they made in the last. The full school programme includes improvisations showing the attitudes of parents to their children of different sexes, discussion in groups with the adjudicators, further work with their teachers (combined in the Teacher's Notes compiled by the company) then the performance and further discussion. By the end of the first discussion internal students who had started off unexcitedly inattentive at parents' screens towards their children had begun to see the influence of media, peer pressure and superstition.

While Mr Jack, You Jill is fairly and squarely in the apartment, the company seems again to be testing their way with a new director and a new playwright. The 700,000 scene is a discussion of the kind of unemployment in a community theatre piece written by John Ramerel in collaboration with the company during a



Robert Menzies and Michael White in *Agony's The 700,000*

six week playwright-in-residence grant in April and May. The play takes you travelling into the black hole of unemployment at the speed of light with the abruptness of passion and the clarity of rhyming poems, songs, gangs and rats. The rhymers is Ramerel politics and the rats are the unemployed characters' personal histories that place them in their social slot.

T and Eric are members of WAFL (dejected with arms upflung) and a well-placed lack to the group. WAFL is Women Against Female Unemployment, a new and desperate radical group who lobby the Minister for Social Security but are failed by her speak, son who has been paying his mother's disability a girl in Treasury to do the Minister's juggling for her. The girl in Treasury, however, turns out to be a supercomputer neoper and the

kidnappers and kidnapper drive off into the sunset placing in the thought of the apprehending things they can do to the politicians and the government if only they choose. Most of the play takes place while they are locked up in the bowels of a disused bakery, where they, song and rave and indulge in delightful contradictions.

It is not always clear where they and the dialectic are going, but it is always clear that they are always methodical, amusing, and starkly convicted. The music, by Joe Woodward is biting and catching and happy, not to the "nave". While the play ends on a note of optimism, I wonder how much good it does the unemployed to see their own miseries played out before them: times of adversity are historically times of escaped entertainment and while here the format is compact (over 100 minutes, ideas, and) the content is dreadfully serious, often heartbreakingly so, a consequence-meander it would otherwise work, but the problem is to find some un-concerned to preach to. Placed before the parliamentary Liberal Party it might be devastating!

The Festival of Australian Drama presented by Canberra Repertory and the Canberra Theatre Trust opened over two very full weekends (June 13 to 22) at 10 (two-five) place, eight were from outside the ACT, with thirteen unadorned-of companies mushrooming all over Canberra for the occasion.

Much to one's surprise it was the established companies that took most of the awards, in particular The Australian Theatre Workshop founded by the memorial Ralph Wilson took two awards for its first of the International Best actor (Harris Schmidt) and Best Performance Canberra Playwright Mike Gales shared the award for the first new play (jointly with Malcolm Pittgrove who wrote and directed Perish Mary Verlags who played Jens in *The Jim Adams Show* was named Best Actress. And of course the Agony Theatre Company won the director's award for Mr Jack, You Jill. All the awards were well deserved but overall the festival was disappointing.

Advance advertising claimed that "Canberra already hosts the Playwrights' Conference" and now the Festival of Australian Drama! Now Canberra Repertory or the Canberra Theatre Trust can lay claim to the Playwrights' Conference a entirely unclear but certainly the Festival this year was in no way in the Playwrights' Conference Big League Next year perhaps.

THEATRE/NSW



STAFF REP
JILL WAGNER,
EXEC. EDITOR

Short of magnificent

THE ORESTIA

By Robert Page

The Orestia by Aeschylus • National Theatre, Sydney
Nathan Webb, Director, June 18, 1990

Cast: John Bell, Douglas, Sam Carpenter, Christopher Mullins, Irene, Simonson, Christine Kellie, Lindsay, Stephanie Martin, Mags, Monique, Maggie Wright

Cost: Paul Barnett, Capital Rooms, Bill Carr, Ralph Corbett, Colin Firth, Ivanhoe Collins, Ken McQuade, John McManus, Anna Vokla

(Aeschylus)

When I and it in Sydney, The Orestia by Aeschylus. Cycles in Adelaide, *The Orestia* in Melbourne, and now *The Orestia*. Audiences seem once again to be capable of taking their theatre in sitting and hefty draughts, at least occasionally.

The *Orestia* as a subtexted house has the ability, even duty to maintain audience awareness of the great dramas of the past. No one can accuse it, though, of theatrical archaeology, of encasing the long dead in occlusive like museums in a museum. *What Aeschylus* was imbued with the excruciating knowledge of an Italian circus and *Corso* of *Primo* the whirling gaudiness of a farago and cannot control as such treatments may be their vitality cannot be denied.

The *Orestia* does not lend itself to such theatrical tricks. Ken Carpenter's set glowers with the carbon colours and clay verbiage of a barbarous age. Flanking a central mud hut, soil mounds flanked with poles, part totters part primitive spires.

For a moment the fear is that this will be yet another writhing, moaning "trial" version of Greek tragedy. But when John Bell has done, at risk of making Aeschylus appear primitive, is to face the subject and themes of this twenty-five century old tragedy square on. He has decided that it is a parable of early civilisation, that its epic story of the cycle of revenge in the House of Atreus, which culminates in Orestes being



freed by Athena's court, is a metaphor of the change from the old law of an eye for an eye revenge to the civilised system of a tribunal.

The first two plays, and the events leading up to them, clearly evidence the inescapable cycle of private vengeance that each death requires a death of unending retribution. Before the play begins, Thyestes had wronged Atreus and walked away with his own children in reple. Now Agamemnon is returning from the Trojan War to a wife who wants to murder him for the murder of their daughter that has triumphed.

The house itself has been the setting for most of the atrocious events while Thyestes' gruesome banquet, each killing, has been a perversion of a host's hospitality, the victims are all of the house or lineage of Atreus. When the King returns his final act of pride, ordered by his wife, is to trample on the crimson cloth of the house. Its front wall demands to become a ramp into a black hole of death, it rises like a huge jaw consuming all who have entered.

Rarely does Bell's interpretation suffer. Perhaps his over-physicalisation, the Agamemnon, a play of words and almost no implicit action. But when he has brother and sister work themselves up to fever pitch in the second play, then called *Elektra*, he is spot on. Though in the final play, the Furies lacked the stoic headgear which calcimates the viper imagery, their role as dark remnants of an old world is clearly a polarity to the shining, Christ-like Apollo.

The production is also well served by the

sheer physical limitations of the Upstart Theatre, particularly when further curtailed by the damp and the powers of the actors. Dressed in primitive skins, staff sheep-wells and moorish robes, with Elektra close to my vision of Paganism.

It required power and presence to make such anachronistic costumes work as they should.

The Agamemnon witnessed the most Rhythmic, taking upon herself the dynasty and leadership of Argos and the murder of the King, her husband and nephew, warrior, makes for one of the most magical and deadly roles on drama. It was a stage which Anna Vokla could not make. And Paul Barnett as Thyestes, son Agamemnon, is more an actor for comedy than tragedy.

Among the characters, sharing upwards of thirteen roles plus chorus, Colin Firth, Anna Vokla and Ralph Corbett were the most successful. Firth's phoenician Orestes' inner turmoil about his impending matricide and later torment of the figure pursued by the Furies. As Elektra, Anna Vokla burned with the love turned to hate of a wronged daughter. And Ralph Corbett, an actor of remarkable vocal and physical diversity, varied between a nobly savage Agamemnon, striding out silent towards his doom, and a malevolent serpentine leader of the Furies.

Perhaps the actors and audience alike felt in role too remote, in gods and lives too alien and its impact too dependent upon word rather than implied action, whatever it was, the production as a whole fell short of achieving that magic glow and conveying the awesome magnificence of a major drama, masterpiece.

Yesterday's realism

THE BRIDE OF COMPEL PHLEA

By Barry GM senior

My Book of Theatrical Plays for Young People (NEDA, 1984, Silver Salaries \$200, Paperback \$10, 1984)
 Director: Nathan Mellow (Douglas) Stephen Gird
 Stage Manager: Suzanne Humphries

Cost: £10. Script: Pamela Merington. Roles: Nathan Martin with Barry Olsen, Barry O'Leary, Paul Blackwell, George Lewis, Mark Ferguson, George Campbell, Helen Jones, John Hansen, Ray Middleton, Steven Drake, Ben Harris, David Richardson, Louise Bennett

(Book is ready)

Yesterday's social realism has a way of turning up as today's romantic melodrama. At least that's what *The Bride of Compel Phleu*. Lotus Eaten's slice of Melbourne slum life in the twenties has done in its adaptation to NEDA at Lane Street.

We probably need reminding that, along with social realist preoccupations and tight-lipped taboos about sex, the cancer of the times in which Eaten wrote and tried accurately to reflect the pressures and poverty which bore his Depression Britain. In the *Penetration Age* it's pretty hard to get too excited about a heroine who is dying of TB, although it's followed to Angela Punch Merington that you do manage the necessary sympathy.

Miss Punch gives fresh currency to the she-tragedy tradition which reaches back to Jane Shore (1715). A harem was they call her "The Bride" for her promise and her penchant for what she refers to Melburnian's 3 mil. Even after losing her love and her money to a Sydney roofer, no wonder has she dropped her part and ordered a coffin in Spain's where the directors of *Shakespeare* hang out, than the Bride finds a new Beau hovering for her affections.

The Beau is, however, and tale confounder Mark Reynolds, played by Anthony Martin. He's been "told women" but the Bride is "different", he thinks. They decide it's a go and run headlong into a love-un-forgiveness tragedy of misunderstandings that are heated and ironed by deathbed and coffin-side confessions. These difficult scenes, however, are played distinct enough to witness embarrassed giggling but they are still rather quaint in today's theatre of anti sentiment.

Audience Mellow directs in a style which blends realism and cartoon characterization in a curiously successful way. But perhaps this isn't so surprising of a play which is located somewhere between *The Curious Persim* and *Guns and Daddy*. Notes

are packed on stage and real here — well. Melbourne beer and wine is drunk by actors who are safely missing the end of the play. One runner quibble: the actors actually inhale their cigarette smoke. And this the Depression! You can take a few, you can take them on stage, but you can't take the drawback. The *Watson General* warns that Realism is bad for your Health!

One remembers the character creations rather than their instructions, although the scenes between Miss Punch and Mr Martin are recognisable. Barry O'Leary and Vincent Garratt are highly successful as stage nationalists. Mr O'Leary's Greek role, however, is truthfully observed. Miss Gerington's French girl more convincingly but self-parody written into the part (How versatile is she in also turning her hand to the complaining, hospitalised doctor, who knows, are dropping up to her chest). David Richardson's Madame Deleu and Barry Olsen's un-entitled clerk are both excellent. Mr Olsen's vocalisation, a kind of musical cackle, with a ring of impudence which

belies his randomness, are amusing, as his resemblance to a previous Prime Minister, John Gorton's "Miles" Davis, a glad-handed manchester, is also impressive in his repertoire of *Spokenword* studies and *horror-fiction*. There are many other Damon Runyan portraits in the production, and only a few unsuccessful period sketches.

Do I need to say if I liked the production? Thank God Lane Street is still with us. It's a small theatre for the most part and many scene changes in this play, but Stephen Gird's sets are worth waiting for, especially the rain set. This is very well thought out, even down to the smudge prints on the glass doors.

It's good to see what is called "the Australian classic" being done, but I think you've got to find reasons for doing it beyond those of its being Australian and a so-called classic. I got the sense of a play which was "just being done", rather than trying to say something to today's audience.



Angela Punch Merington, Steven Drake and David Richardson in *NEDA's* *The Bride of Compel Phleu*.

Clarity of vision

HENRY IV (I)

By Lucy Wagner

Scene 11, Part 2 in *Shakespeare's Hunter Valley Theatre Company, with the University of Newcastle Drama Department, Arts Theatre Theatre, Newcastle NSW. Opened June 21 1982.*

Director: Aaron Neume. Designer: Stephen Curtis. Music: Allen McFadden.

Cast: King Henry, Malcolm Barnes; Prince Hal, David Moody; Falstaff, Don Barker; Douglas, Paul Miller; Lady Percy, Myfanwy Morgan; Mistress Quickly, Cat Rimmerman; Lady Mortimer, Louise Newbery; Worcester, Anthony Bagnall; Weston, David Greenaway; French, Garfield; Archbishop, John Barker; John Mowbray, John Douglas; John Douglas, Alan Pike; Nigel Thyngham, Christopher Carter; Peter Denning, Michael Mortimer; Archbishop, Alan Barker; Cardinal, Norman Newbery; Jim Mortimer, Christine Pearce; Mowbray, Don Gibson; Henry, Ian Michael; Mowbray, Stuart Wood; Sir Thyngham, Christopher; Vernon, Paul Davis.

Photo: Tony

A production of Shakespeare that is aimed in large part at school children studying the text is faced with the problems of choice: whether to stage a standard historical production to show context, whether to take a particular line on the text which might require fresh interest and interpretation, whether to emphasise poetry and imagery, a clear story line or maintain involvement through non-business action and comedy.

For his Newcastle production of *Henry IV (I)*, Aaron Neume has tried to score a path between these extremes, but has leaned most towards a close embodiment of dynamic and plot. This is offset by updating the period to a nebulous World War One era England in which the court and rebels are besetted by bureaucrats, the tavern crowd merrily and drunkenly downed and all are finally united in khaki heartedness. In a programme note Neume has distanced any specific correlation between the events of the Civil War and WWI, but reasonably points out that the period will hold similar class values and methods of war-mongering, and is visually at least as acceptable as an indiscriminate doublet and hose production that the Hunter Valley Theatre Company budget might otherwise afford.

Certainly after the opening moments, the discrepancy between appearance and language was forgone, and only the poignancy and dignity of Shakespeare's court life seemed obscured by the monochrome garb of office hours, while evening dress later evoked an appropriate sense of class and distinction.

This black and white was offset, too, in Stephen Curtis' setting. The playing space of the Arts Theatre Theatre was brought forward right into the audience by



Don Barker in HYVIC's *Henry IV*

using only the apron and a naked extension, backed by a harked wire fence and covered in newspaper, an updated symbol of the frontier exchange of information that leads the action of the play. These thoughtful means to look at, was dominated by a long table up-stage (doubling as floor room and tavern) which allowed room for such lateral movement before a depriving particularly the tavern and robbery scenes of their potential action and giving a flattening effect to the whole.

Colour and movement in this production, then, remained very much the prerogative of the actors and their characterisation. Don Barker's Falstaff stood out as the indispensable comic piece large in body and spirit. He infused all the tavern scenes with life and comedy and in his protest lever actors were happily hauled in his glow. Not only did this Falstaff succeed as the blusterer and comic, but the pathetic side of the character became increasingly discernible, prefiguring *Part 2*, in spite of his triumphant finish of *Part 1*.

The cast was made up of HYVIC's core company, additional local professionals and students from the University's Drama Department, in conjunction with whom the play was produced. As the lower-class characters the students managed well enough in large scenes but just seemed out on the periphery of the audience when on their own in the "comic" transit scenes.

The *Henry 4* of the piece turned out to be more of a constant than was perhaps intended. David Wood as Hal gave a lovely performance of mixed success. The

Prince appeared convincingly self-sufficient with a quiet strength, but lacking the capacity for unreserved enjoyment and the sense of integrity which singles him out as the future king. The peak of his performance was in the role-playing scene with Falstaff alternately as King and Prince, rather than the usual confrontation with his father which spurs him on to victory in battle.

Hopper, as played by Paul Miller, also lacked range starting off with a loud angry-faced, fan-shaking portrayal that left the character with no possibility of development. Rather than standing as a worthy, though extreme, opponent to Hal Holmer became increasingly tedious, an over-zealous caricature of a military man. This performance would surely have been more appropriate to Shakespeare's single scene, leaving the versatile Frank Garfield free to have portrayed a more nuanced version of Henry Percy.

Aaron Neume, again for the benefit of school audiences, has left the play in present intact form and although it runs a full three hours, can count its success on an almost unflagging audience involvement and unswerving clarity of narrative.

It is not without fresh touches of humour as in Allen McFadden's plaintive, Bardall and John Boyles' wild-eyed, Scottish Douglas or modernity, with Louise Newbery's rendition of Lady Mortimer's rarely performed Welsh song, and the King (Malcolm Barnes)'s final realisation of his own worth but inevitably this production loses out on the wider themes, imagery and resonances in favour of bare comprehension.

Loot

By Adrian Wain

Four by Joe Orton (Riviera Trucking Company Theatre Works, NSW, opened July 4, 1993)
Director: Peter Barclay, set design: Anthony Babbitt, Stage manager: Ross Brown, Wardrobe: Anita Edith, Lighting design: Mark Hinds
Cast: Michael, Kim Moffat, Fay, Helen May, Neil Joslin Ryan, Simon, Wayne Pagnon, Trevor, Simon McFarley, Madeline, Peter Holme
(Forthcoming)

For the Riviera Trucking Company's third 1980 production, RITC director Peter Barclay chose Joe Orton's *Four*, comprising a trio comprising *Box One*, *Mr Bitch* and *The Perish Day*—a range of styles that has offered Riviera's theatregoers the opportunity to savour the kind of low supposedly accessible only to capital city audiences.

Barclay's direction of *Four* emphasised melodrama rather than moodier aspects of a theatrical language that for me glows with the fine flame of literary quality and the flicker of wit rather than the steady oil and threat of successful play dialogue. By this I mean that there's a Schreierian lameness in Orton's dialogue which sounds a warning bell in terms of affective translation in the stage.

As it turned out, such tragedy is dispensed in this production, for the primary reason that Peter Barclay sought and achieved a concentration on melodramatic values as a point of departure. Thus the audience was caught up inevitably in the texture of an apparently typical detective story delivered moreover at crackling pace.

Yet *Four* also concerns itself with a probing and cynical evaluation of officialdom particularly that practised by the police, and a very investigation of religious attitude, social aspirations and values, and the finer points of deception. Its mixture of bank robbery and corpse disposal means that *Four* suits the noble English tradition of knockabout music-hall comedy, and Orton's creation of Truscott, a double-acting director, is a rare touch in commending his play to audiences intent on being entertained.

The engaging thing about *Four* is its delightfully couched savagery. Written in the course of corpse-shedding, one of the dead lady's glass eyes falls out and is later returned by Truscott, and when, in a light-hearted moment, her bank-robbor we performs a Spanish dance accompanying himself with her false teeth and as customers, our relish in improbability is suddenly tempered with the thought that perhaps it could happen. Similarly, police detectives don't normally pretend they're representatives of the Water Board. But in the name of public welfare it could happen.

The figure of Truscott, imperious, suggestive, chained to the railhead, dominates *Four*, and Stuart McCrory turned on an engaging performance, holding the stage in a synthesis of Schreier and Groucho Marx. Kim Moffat capably sustained the illusion of old age as the quavering McFarley, whose newly unhitched wife is ungraciously shunted from collar to cupboard to table throughout the play. Helen May, as the personable nurse Fay, and Justin Ryan as the "wide boy" Hal, brought vitality and sly style to their roles, while Wayne Pagnon as the underlayer can bank robber needed a less general approach.

Anthony Babbitt's set blended sophistication with meticulous detail in furnishings and fittings.

Over serious about slight piece

SHOCK!

By Tony Barclay

Shock! (The Brown Gypsies, Marston Street Theatre, Kilsyth, NSW, opened 27 June, 1993)
Director: Winston Dawson, Designer: Gladys Rogers, Lighting: Danny Bradburn, Production Manager: Jeremy Gaird
Cast: Andy, Oliver Rodd, Simon, Louise Pike, Terry, Paul Womersley, Lily, Michael Goss, Jane, Ross Campbell, Peter Brown Wilson, Maggie Black, Michaela
(Forthcoming)

The Marston Street Theatre has been so splendidly reassured that one cannot but congratulate all concerned. Of course not everything has changed. *Shock!* (the theatre can Post control) was looking plump and contented, growing the thick carpet in the rare expansive layer. Then there is the programming, the standard spray of mysterious musical "well-made" comedies.

This time yet another mystery whodunit, with no less than three nearly butchered corpses in a *Psyche* some of the most delicate butchery I have seen considering the weapon was a surgical sword. And again there's some very fine acting, an impressive set, and in the woman in black of me remarked while leaving "Yes and that, and black, black, black!"

Shock! is a tedious piece of imitation that is the responsibility of British television man Brian Clemens. As H G Kippax remarked in a "voice too loud with no lower note", "some too scrupulous with its red herrings", weak on motivation and the ending is not believable—a view confirmed by the nature of grunts and dissonant chuckles that greeted the final curtain. Clemens, indeed, seemed so

preoccupied with scattering the point about and herings that the plays Clemens went out the door. If director Dawson managed to bring the obvious comedy to the fore it escapes me why he allowed his actors to come at the things so straight-faced missing whatever inherent wit and comedy would be damaged from the script.

Clemens (perhaps best known for his *Avengers* and *Danger Man* scripts) has a credibility lost hidden by the sleight of hand of television. He's a kind of stereotypical manager. One could imagine, for example the dead contents and musical expression of either of those Patrick M's delivering a statement on a would be suicide (by hanging) as increasing one's height by six inches, and casually getting away with it. In this production the live died in a vacuum. Similarly the close shot of hands on face and object might have enhanced the wedding of a sharp kitchen knife. Here it was only awkward and clumsy, and yet and horror. Or again, a near corpse staggering and shuffling the full length of an upstairs passage, down stairs and across the full stage to seemed an electricity became programed and becoming. In fact the stage shocks became transparent, just quietly obvious.

Doreen Burgen set was impressive and functional. There was, however, an unreasonable cloak of set and lighting towards the end of the first scene when, supposedly late afternoon the set was so dark one could not see the two players' faces while outside the back window it glowed like Australian summer. Sound cues were random to the point of absurdity, twanging cassettes on most nights does not produce backward bubble as does a studio tape.

The acting was for the most part very good despite the tedious pacing of the second act. Michael Goss was most impressive as the hepper Andy, rejecting a stroke of murder and one assumes that one would have liked to see more developed. With Goss's memorable Rev from last years *SDS!* *Grover* *Shelley* in mind I, for one, would hope to see a lot more from him in the near future. Paul Simon, whose superb *Clay* in the *Ensemble* *Revolutions* remains a vivid memory, was similarly interesting but overall too muted. More dry comments could have come from the character Terry. Oliver Rodd's Ann was strong although not without ham-fisted moments when she discovers her dead niece (whom the murdered anyway), or remembering a plane crash. Louise Pike's Jenny suffered from being too screen.

Generally the production suffered from being over serious about something to slight and even highlighting its watery comedy could not ameliorate its weaknesses.

THEATRE/QLD



STAFF REP.
GEOFF CARTWRIGHT

Gutsiness and inspiration

WAITING FOR GODOT DICKINSON

by Veronica Kelly

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett. TN Company
Cinema Box Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened June 11
1988

Director: Rick Billingham, Designer: Stephen Jones,
Stage Manager: Stephen Jones, Music: Peter
Eaton, Geoff Cartwright, Vladimir: James Porter,
Lucky: Terry Cook, Pozzo: Duncan, Moon: Ray
Steven Hamilton.

(Previously)

Produced by David Allen, La Boite Theatre in Brisbane
Qld. Opened June 27 1986

Director: Vladimir Blazevski, Assistant: Janet Lane,
Lighting: Leonard Baskin, Stage Manager: Duncan
Eggle.

(This day)

As the TN Company's publicity reminds us, Vladimir and Estragon have been waiting under that tree for twenty five years now, a time which would have passed in any case, but without Godot not so entertainingly. Rick Billingham's production focuses not on the question of why the tramps are there at all, but, quite rightly, on what they do while they're there.

The emphasis on discovering how every single moment is to be structured delivers a reading which seems at first rather deliberately paced. Becoming more concentrated in its assumptions, are quietly imposed. Within these, snap-snap come routines vary the pace; standard devices welcomed by the characters for the momentary security of the chance of coherent personal interaction. Vladimir, Estragon and Pozzo perform one such as they prolong the business of approaching Lucky to put on his thinking hat, while Lucky himself remains withdrawn from these routines the others appear to spin the change from the monotony of their usual double act.

There have, I imagine, been more broadly comic and clownish Godots; what this one has is the intelligence to perceive

the severity of human solitude plus the passion to fight through to a rigorously experienced expression of both the cost and the necessity of survival.

Vladimir and Estragon, who carry the main burden of the enterprise, are here a finely complementary pair, adult to child, successful pacifier to prickly absolutist. Geoff Cartwright's clean secure style counterpoints his partner's gambles, more complicated rhythm, an impressively mature achievement for both young actors. However were this nugget to run a yearly round, a *la Moliere* and *Plautus*, for the category of "break-through performance", Jim Porter would receive my nomination for a Vladimir one would look long to better.

Duncan Moon, who has played the part before in Brisbane for Camerata, seems to be developing his own authoritative Pozzo tradition. This stylishly bald trailing figure, on the first in demonstrating the comic insanity underlying the character's Victorianism (theatricality). His Lucky (Terry Cook) is a child with whose stubborn goal is a dry and bloodied withdrawal achieved in the second act in dry obvious like that of Alice's Dormouse. One can see the point behind Pozzo's prophecy that Lucky will make him suffer, as the catfist vulgarity of the infant or the wretch contains a particular power to punish with company.

As TN seeks an artistic director to follow John Mifson, *Godot* (hailed by a local critic as an "international" standard — peculiar assumptions there somewhere) serves as a formidable example of the level of integrity and excellence which audiences have already come to expect from the Company as a matter of course.

La Boite's Dickinson is the kind of loosely structured documentary can take lecture which could so easily fall apart if not given pretty dynamic and committed treatment in this production it gets it. Even so it's not the kind of show I'd care to see in less expert hands as it could soon enough revert to its origin as a TVE-type re-enactment of local history ("Goodness 1985 already and old Bert's been away two years now" — etc). Inherent dramatic contradictions are exemplified in a speech where a worker explains to his night school instructor in an exercise of Shavian clarity why the rules of grammar function as an instrument of ideological oppression to smother the workers' voices. One learns to respect Beckett and Beckett more every day.

However the show does serve an educational purpose in reminding one of the deadly barrenness of the struggle against a predatory and bloodthirsty capitalism,



TN Company: *Waiting for Godot*. Left: Geoff Cartwright (Estragon). Right: Jim Porter (Vladimir)

modernising rather this century in The Depression, making the one in the thirties just as they used to call the 1918 run-in the Great War, before numbering proved more appropriate. The actor's son Dickinson declines to contract plays for a television wage, educates himself, joins the Warblers (becomes a charismatic agitator and organizer in Australia, encounters the fascists in Berlin and is killed by them in Spain).

The production is of a fine standard with La Boite's mix of inexperience and accomplished amateur actors in as near as possible a state of homogeneous achievement. Notable among many pleasing performers are Stephen Wilk's childlike "Ham and Egg" Lyons, Jim Doberty's pompously roused Moonie a splendid vagabond by Chris Harris as Orwell, and Terry Phelan a tower of strength as the tritlar hero. No breakthroughs for female actors, their characters tend to read "Wife, Mother, Girlfriend, Daughter", history can indeed be demonstrated to be going backwards, and in some pretty obvious ways. Roll on *Passions* in September.

Meanwhile the gassy energy and outpoken accented pronouncements of Dickinson should be destined and sprinkled success in a place (Australia) where they are too seldom heard in any public forum.

THEATRE/SA

Sinks slowly and inevitably

THE FLOAT

By Ursula Fells

The Float by Alan Seymour (State Theatre Company, Melbourne, Adelaide, SA, Opened June 11, 1988)
Director: Kerin Palmer (Design: Nicki Fawcett)
Cast: Brett Fisher, Susan Lyons, Kevin Miles, Douglas Goss, Andrew Lamb, Fabian Holmgren, James Lander, Robert Smith
(City & Country)

Unlike *Nowhere Ark*, Seymour's *Float* does not seem likely to survive the storms and tempests that have accompanied its all-around launching in Adelaide. It is built with little of the oral intimacy of *The One Day* of the hear and its holes and weaknesses ensure that like the little-known Mr Parpantrick's son, it sinks slowly and inevitably out of sight well before the end.

It is difficult to believe that *The One Day* of the *Ark* and *The Float* come from the same pen. The almost capricious opening night audience, which might have been hoping for a companion piece on the seventies, found itself promptly disabused by this clumsy and dull fairy tale version of Whitlamb's wailing in 1973: 'Why fairy tale?' (Why not?) Seymour and his director assure the audience, that they are dealing with 'public people in private' (in this case?) and a 'mythical setting in society' but the events in the second half seemed more than somewhat similar to the real ones. This combination of 'real' and 'mythical' clearly intrigued both director and cast (unfortunately the audience was left wondering just as intrigued (them not?) by the performers' doomed struggle to present eye-wat characters as three-dimensional. These puppet-like creations might well have served the artificial nature of the piece more faithfully if their strings had stayed clearly visible. As it was we were left with figures receding a series of hybrid Pausanias, pastoral mostly artificial.

The directors attempt to present (apparently) real people where only monkeys were required left the actors all at ease. Moreover, struggling as they were with an accumulation of contrived and clumsy dialogue they managed to set before the audience possibly the most uncomfortable looking cast seen in a professional production in some time. And if the author had really intended to present certain characters he could surely have



Robert Smith, Douglas Goss, James Lander, Kevin Miles and Susan Lyons (clockwise from left) in The Float. Photo: David Wilson

given them rather more appropriate dialogue. One's heart bled for Susan Lyons, cast as a strongly sexual and absurd seductress, forced to advocate the use of the disastrous apron up the vagina in the midst of a live TV discussion among politicians. Was this symbolic? A case of the medium oversteering (or distorting) the message? Do we all need dead-enders in order to be sure to be near? Or only politicians?

There is also a particularly dreary post-poned poster (mot. ah ha!) clearly meant to provide instant enlightenment concerning the various relationships: son girlfriend, father son, father girlfriend. Predictably enough if failed to develop the characters in any direction they did not emerge as the people their words struggled to describe nor did their lives correspond to their physical representation. And Nicky

Porter's extravagant set for this scene was more reminiscent of a well-out at Le Corbusier than of the Bourgeois backward of the Australian nouveau riche on barbecue (is not are the two after all identical?)

The plays are highlights came simultaneously after the interval when fans of the State Theatre Company were treated to the sight of a never to be seen again chorus line featuring Robert Grubb, Edwin Hodgeman and Kevin Miles (if dressed in fur). A more for contemporaries of live camp. Through an afternoon maybe the play might have worked if the director had decided to maintain this sort of spirit. Inevitably the conclusion may have been less memorable if it really was. However overall this is desperate attempt to stage the one play of the year that should have been rejected at the onset did nothing to enhance the reputation of the Company.

THEATRE/VIC



STAGE BOB
WILLIAMS
SPONSOR

Contrived, mannered and forced

LE MAÎTRE À PARIS

By Colin Duckworth

Le Maître à Paris by Georges Feydeau, translated by Murray Grove and Ed Fother, The Australian Shakespeare Theatre Trust and J. C. Williamson Productions Ltd. (The Master's Theatre Melbourne) Opens June 12, 1990
Director: Basil Langston, Designer: Neil Finn-Jones, Lighting: Walter van Nieuwenh, Cost: Michael Lewis, Sound: Peter van Lillo, Book: Richard John Bartal, Music: Kelly Wild, Iron: Peter John Allen, Director: Charles Spence, Assistant Director: Terry Brinkley, Executive Producer: Polina Polina, Publicist: Helen Brown (Produced)

Feydeau spotted it *Monsieur Chou* (The Master's last flanking), and it was one of the first to make him the undisputed king of light comedy in the Belle Époque being first produced in 1892, four years before *Une vie*, and the same year as *Charles* a *chou*.

It is still reckoned to be one of his most ingenious comedies, along with *Le Dindon* and *À l'opéra de Paris* and *Le Maître à Paris*, which have all been repeatedly revived all over the world in an endless succession of successions.

Feydeau, Camille Jordan individually, all gifted as they often were as comic genius, verbal charm and romantic panache. Quite confession? Why, then, did it seem so contrived, mannered and forced? Why did the ingredients not turn into the perfect mayonnaise we all anticipated?

First let it be said that in this standardised version of Feydeau's tale of unrequited lust and unrequited sheets, there are some delightful moments, especially in Act 2 Louis Jordan in bowler, underpants and necktie, especially when he is in a state of evening disaster, but costume delights at the discomfort of his would-be mistress's

husband, the Inspector's knowing explosion of breath as his peacock eye came up the bedroom curtain. And some witty lines: the girl doesn't see the bed too early "It's his inactivity you mustn't let 'em see the excitement ahead of time!" Duchatel's remarking the news that "another addition is about to be put into circulation," not knowing it is his own wife.

The plot has all the elements of vintage Feydeau: partly, increasingly rapid development, misunderstandings, evening chaos under the bed and into the dawn, split-second timing and bringing together the wrong people in the wrong place, accelerating ultra-quick thinking and morose deception. It is prodigiously clever, and Feydeau created some of his most successful types in this play: Dr. Morisset, the entrapment master after the fashion of Leonine Duchatel, who agrees (and will very reluctantly) to spend the night in Morisset's bachelor pad only when



John Finn-Jones and Kelly Wild in a scene from *Le Maître à Paris*

she is convinced that her husband's flunking (or, in this case, flunking-a-cop) involves another kind of bed.

Morisset is proud of his new set-up of 13 rue de l'Amour. He has been there only a couple of weeks and has no idea that the other apartment on the same floor is the meeting-place of Duchatel and Mrs. Barthelemy. Furthermore, he took the flat over from a concave one of whose lover, the Duchatel's impressionable nephew still has a key and doesn't know she has left there.

From the moment Morisset and his Leonine enter the bedroom, they never have a moment's peace together. Rather it is like coverage in constant action on end days, played with great speed by Betty Brinkley, or Duchatel wearing medical assistance for his mistress (and rapping Dr. Morisset about his girlfriend hidden in the next room) or the nephew back with his key and giving information about his aunt

and uncle that can be turned into hard cash in Act 3, or the Inspector making the wrong apartment and leaving the wrong man off to the cell.

As everyone has something to hide: the complex web of deceit is intricately cut through in Act 3. Monsieur Duchatel promises never to go hunting again. He'll go fishing instead!

It is all based, then, on a ludicrousness of coincidences. One can forgive and even forget this, with any Feydeau play, providing the style of acting and production is sincere and convincing, but in this case it was angry, overacted and pantheistic. The set was in sight at the start, the actors came on one by one, self-consciously bowing and scraping like circus performers to pick up applause as actors. After this false-start opening, it was impossible for even the experienced Mr. Carson and M. Jordan to revert inevitably to the correct tone demanded by any Feydeau: hence that of minor embarrassment and dominance about to be shattered blow upon blow by Fate gone loose.

The unusual acting style (particularly the delivery of chunks of dialogue from downstage out to the audience — one sometimes wondered if Leslie Chase had forgotten Louis Jordan was still on stage) prevented one's ever believing in what one was seeing, because the characters did not believe in themselves.

Basil Langston pronounced himself well pleased with the Australian cast, and with reason. Neil Finner made his cameo Inspector role memorable simply by being simply John Bartal produced a splendidly easy performance in Act 2. They were not helped by the musical-comedy style imposed on the main roles.

Great Feydeau performances, say, by Jacques Chateau or Robert Hirsch develop from the consciousness of unremarkable undertone and only unintentionally funny people whose downfall is caused by their complacency, egotism, and failure to communicate. Perhaps it was Mr. Langston's experience as an opera director that played him false and never allowed us to forget we were in a theatre.

Finally, a word about language. It seems a pity to have two fine French performers solely, only to have them deliver their lines in impeccable, but not English. English. Neither was a French English. One can imagine the French atmosphere Charles Bayer and Yvonne Arnaud would have created! The translators should at least have left in a few French exclamations.

Wobbly script/ Finely judged

THE DOOR
ALIEN CORN

By Catherine Peake

The Door by David Porter. La Mama Theatre, Melbourne, Vic. Opened June 12, 1988.
Directed by: Jean Pierre Mignan. Sounddesigner: Bruce Ray. Photo: Scott G. Greenberg. Visual Effects: Trevor Gill. Props: Margaret and Bruce Morgan. Edward Walker, played by Bruce Keller.
(Price: \$10)

Alien Corn by Bruce Knappett. La Mama Theatre, Melbourne, Vic. Opened June 17, 1988.
Directed: David Smith. Music: Petera Latham. Lighting: Bruce Dixon.
Cost: Ross. Dance: Sherry. Text: Brenda Kendall. Music: Norman Hancock. Lyrics: Bruce Knappett.
(Price: \$10)

Neither of the two Australian plays comprising La Mama's latest double bill are likely to provoke much reaction in terms of their subject matter or structure. Both pieces are short, and both deal in a more or less conventional fashion with the struggles of an embattled and alienated individual whose survival variously depends on strategies of self-defence and withdrawal.

The Door by David Porter has already been produced in both London and Newcastle. At La Mama it was staged rather like a prop show, using a dark stage and theatre lighting to emphasise a concrete "looking through the keyhole" relation with the audience. In some ways, one left the play feeling that a written script was being propped up by extravagant theatrical devices.

Edward Walker, the concealed double character who is finally tracked down by the police and the media, has none of the engaging melancholy and imaginative strength of the character to whom we are first introduced as his lights, his nerves and nightmares with the wish of a candle (some choose) a pile of old newspapers and dense memories of an education in cinema.

Indeed the transition from the murder and sexualised refusal to the man who masturbates as he talks with the female radio presenter, and threatens to blow up the old lady, is poorly managed. And though Edward is skillfully played by Bruce Keller, and Jean Pierre Mignan's direction is adequate, it unquestionably the energy of the piece tends to dissipate into a language of theatre counter-attacks and poetic indulgence.

In contrast Bruce Knappett's *Alien Corn* is a carefully composed, coherent and finely judged in terms of pace and drama, and



Edward Walker in *The Door* (Photo: Scott Greenberg)

Written as the middle act of a "trilogy" its chief subject, Rose, is similarly a victim of self-imposed isolation. Rose lives alone in a boarding house with her misgivings—vases, paper flowers (and a photo of Paul, again from scenes in the form of a ventriloquist's dummy), a constant who-claims-to-be collecting donations for the Lady's birthday present, and someone from National Park Inc. she appears to be entirely cut off from the world. And the chief interest of the piece is in the contrast between the outwardly compliant and genial self she presents to others, and a pathetic clinging to the children and romantic feelings she demonstrates in the private confines of her room.

According to the programme notes, the third part of the "trilogy" is called "Extra Double". If this middle act is an indication of its quality, it should not be missed.

Hosanna in the lowest

HOSANNA

by Suzanne Spanner

Hosanna by Michael Tumbly. Project Space, Melbourne, Vic. Opened June 1, 1988.
Directed and Scripted: Murray England. Lighting: Robert Gifford. Sound: Thomas Hocking. Production: Margaret Sander. Music: George Hanger. Howard Stanley.
Musicians: Robert Gifford, Kelly, Thomas Gifford.
(Price: \$10)

Images of homosexuality on stage and

screen have been rare in Melbourne over the last month with MTC's production of *Bent*, the Playbox production of *Hosanna* and the French-Italian film *La Cage aux Folles*, and comparisons between them are unavoidable. Of the three, *La Cage* and *Hosanna* deal specifically with transvestism while *Bent* touches on transvestism, but focuses on the political repression and persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany. *La Cage* and *Hosanna* are set in contemporary France and Canada respectively in contrast markedly more liberal than Nazi Germany, that the limits of expression rather than the extent of repression are the issues in these works.

Hosanna was written by French Canadian playwright Michael Tumbly, a Quebecois artist who uses as the identity ambiguity of transvestism an analogy for the state of the French-Canadian artist. Unfortunately director, Murray Copland has substituted Sydney for Montreal and denied the play the important other meaning, and placed considerable weight on the language and references.

The play expressly sets up a voyeuristic relationship with the audience and this is compounded by Copland's design: we feel like neighbours in the apartment (flat) opposite viewing our neighbours and straining our ears to catch every syllable of every loud conversation that Hosanna and his lover (Haley) leap upon each other during the long night after the party. As they peer out their window and catch the obviously blinding noon light opposite, they see us, equally impotent and voyeuristic.

In the upstairs of the Playbox the effect was oppressive and painfully claustrophobic and the constantly flashing stage was irritating for us as it was for them. The conventionalised realism of the light and the set was aggressively tight and vulgar but an utterly effective translation of the play's tension. The screaming scene I felt to get out of the space into fresh air and clear light was watched by my screaming and felled with that Hosanna and Haley would leave their bathroom and live in the world outside, and finally that Hosanna would take off her Cleopatra wig and the seductive layers of makeup and show us who he was.

In the final moments of the play this unmasking does happen and the Elizabeth Taylor scene is delivered in a statuesque action of gold cream. Notwithstanding the clichéd nature of the image, for me it provided little short of an orgasmic relief. What was the high point of the play it was, and the only moment in it when I felt both interested in, and "inside" Hosanna. For the rest it was a decidedly uncomfortable exercise in how an actor acts a drag queen while mistakenly believing he is being one.

A PREVIEW OF SOME 1980* SHOWS!

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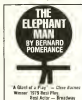
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AE72AD/WHY

BOOKS



BY JOHN
MEL DRAMA

Melodrama and reference

Playing the Empire by David Holloway
Harrop, pp \$28.50

Australian Dictionary of Music Organisations Australian Music Centre

Dictionary of Gay Plays compiled and edited by Terry Hefling Gay Theatre Alliance, LH Press

David Williamson's The Club by Peter Fitzpatrick, Currency Press

Anyone who has read original reviews of nineteenth century melodrama will have noticed the extent to which they use the word 'melodrama' to describe shows which we would think of as wildly improbable, rhetorical and overblown. With lots of backdrops, costumes and wing and/or under-pieces, playbills, emotional incident, black and white moral imperatives and stock character types, an acting style of bombast and set scenes between... it is hard to imagine how readers enter into it. And yet reading David Holloway's *Playing the Empire* you begin to think that perhaps it was all rather after all. As found for the various Holloway, Tearing Companies life was pretty wild.

In the 18th and 19th centuries that was the heyday of the Holloway's kind of theatre they caused four comments, taking complete stock, companies, tell us for up to ten shows, playing each show two or three nights in towns and cities from Johannesburg to Caledonia to Hong Kong and Shanghai. Don't expect for W. E. Holloway, the author's father (or whose memoirs this book is based) years when reading an account of a tour of South Africa to India and the Far East which took thirty four tons of scenery in six railway carriages. With a full-time cast and crew of twenty-seven, returning dozens of cities in each new version, they moved on every two or three weeks, leaving the towns enriched with their particular mixture of Shakespearean melodrama and

comedy. All this was managed efficiently, delightfully and tactfully in Holloway's prose.

In the personal fortunes of the family, too, are all the makings of great melodrama. In the first twenty pages we read of Kate Holloway, (W. E.'s mother) running off into the Australian bush from her drunken romantic-man husband, wrecked sailors on small boats eating each other, births and deaths in storage at sea. In South Africa the company managed on every tour to find themselves caught in the middle of a riot, a war, a miners' strike with lighting in the streets outside the theatre. There are leading actors getting stabbed at the stage door, sailors heading in the wings and outbreaks at sea. In the *Unravelled* W. E.'s father pays him a revolver with three bullets, during one riot, with the words 'If the Killers break loose, you know what to do with your mother and yours.'

The Holloways, seem to have made and lost several fortunes. The delivery of W. E.'s original explanation of the lovers, reflected in David's book, gives them all the arbitrations of the sudden reversal in melodrama. In the same way there are many anecdotes involving typical comic types such as the lady Indian servant or the drunken star actor, which provide melodramatic comic relief.

One is about a star who refused to learn his lines, coping by working around the stage, becoming unrecognisable, moving, and leaving the rest of the cast to try and get the plot across. W. E. says of it one night 'ran all of his lines together into one long speech, reached a climax and expired leaving the star alone on stage. The SM sang down the curtain, the star instead of weeping of anguish, came up to W. E. and asked, 'What happened in that scene?' W. E. replied 'I don't know, you ran, but I don't think you said much.' The star was satisfied. He went out shaking his head, muttering 'I suppose I was a bit faulty.'

If all this were not enough and as it is prone that melodrama is a perfectly good way of getting across serious stuff, this book also provides an enlightening view of the workings of a whole way of theatre which no longer exists. There is also a dignified and interesting delivery of the old way, given in an appendix... a paper read by W. E. at the Memorial Club in 1936. He acknowledges some of the limitations, such as limiting the part to the actor's style, rather than asking the actor to explore the

past. But pays tribute to the discipline, professionalism and absolute sincerity of a really sustained thread of men and women of the theatre.

Perhaps *The Empire* also, incidentally, is a handsomely produced book, entertaining, perfect bedtime reading for resting actors, a perfect gift, and all that.

Finally a few reference books. The *Australian Dictionary of Music Organisations*, published by the Australian Music Centre, is a revised, expanded and updated edition of the earlier directory. It now has some 1000 entries, indexed. The Centre also publishes a series of Catalogues of Australian Compositions, in various categories. For Sydney divisions there is also a library of books, recordings and scores at their office at 20 George Street, The Rocks.

The Gay Theatre Alliance, New York, has published a *Dictionary of Gay Plays*, edited by Terry Hefling, which gives details of nearly American but some European plays, with major gay characters and no predominant gay theme. 'It looks very useful within the limits of the listings. A moderately, in formal, list of topical plays, it is.

Edward II by Christopher Marlowe Drama Publishing 2001, 2F (Doubtless) Prod. Panther's, New London 1991. Publ. Arden Books, New York, 1974.

'By leaving Gloucester Edward alienates his lords, the church and his wife. War breaks out and Edward is captured by Mortimer and eventually killed. Edward's son then has Mortimer hanged and imprisons the Queen in the Tower.'

All of the other plays listed are rather more recent.

Currys, press has launched a new series, designed for schools, of 'Studies in Australian Drama' which are brief pamphlets, giving critical introductions to plays and extracts from reviews. The first is *David Williamson's The Club* by Peter Fitzpatrick, which puts yet another type of stamp of success on this extraordinary play. The introduction places a lot of emphasis on language and sociological relevance without putting the play in much of a theatrical context. This is disturbing, what the schools want, good themes, discussable in the classroom, but it suggests that the setting of recent Australian plays on school syllabi is limiting the plays rather than they are, rather than allowing them to extend school teaching into new areas, it will be interesting when *Don't Go to the Sun* is set as a theatrical text for study in schools.

ACT THEATRE

PLAYHOUSE (466688)

Australian Theatre Workshop

**Diaries* by Stephen Sewell. Director: Warwick Baxter. August 1 and 2

REGAW COMPANY

**The Much Good Show Goes* devised by the Company. Director, Joe Woodward. August 1-22. School season August 22-24. Public season

RED HONE THEATRE WORKSHOP (470081)

Japan Company

**We Jaz. You AF* and **The 300,000* various locations in the ACT
11:00 PM

Men of La Mancha Director, Wayne Shepherd. Weekdays to Saturdays, August 1-16

DANCE

CANBERRA THEATRE (497600)

Sydney Dance Company

Shakespeare's Twelfth Night and *Chorus* August 1-2

PLAYHOUSE (466688)

Canberra Dance Ensemble. August 1-6

OPERA

CANBERRA THEATRE (497600)

Debutante Productions

Mr. Fox with Susan Wagstaff and Peter Toppens. August 5-9

Canberra Theatre Trust in association with the Adelaide Festival Trust

The Masters with Jane Murrell and Dennis Chen

Arturo by Georges Mercedès. With an August 10-12. 7:00-7:30 PM

NSW THEATRE

ANZ THEATRE PRODUCTIONS (9991822)

Cosm Hotel. Taylor Square

The Jolly Boys Show by Tony Hayley and Malcolm Franklin. Directed by Peter

Myerth with music by Gary Smith. Throughout August

BRONTE 1901 (991222)

Macpherson M. Bronte

The Vagabond Show by Perry Quanton. Directed by Perry Quanton with Zoe Brittain, Danny Adcock and Patrick Ward. Throughout August

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (901882)

**No Room for Dreamers* by George Hinchston. Directed by Les Marston with Terry Bader, Alan Becker, Peter Corbett, Shannon O'Grady, Bryan Kerby, Mary-Jill O'Brien and Sonia Lillis. Until August 2

Cold Storage by Ronald Harman. Directed by Hayes Gordon with Len Kesterman and Brian Young. Commences August 2

FIRST STAGE THEATRE COMPANY (821882)

The Master of Deceit in Domestic Form by Gary Barker. Directed by Chris Lewis with Angela Bremer, Denise Corrigan and Gary Hunter. Touring to schools throughout August

FRANK STRAIN'S BULL IN BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (351422)

Black & Blue with music from the turn of the century to contemporary. Noel Brophy, Barbara Windsor, Geoff Meade, Neil Evans and Helen Lewis. Directed by George Gordin. Throughout August

GENESIAN THEATRE (525441)

Theatre Spectre by William Shakespeare. Directed by Margaret Kervette. Until August 21

Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw. Directed by Dean Allen. Commences August 20

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE

(2123401)

Id. Rite of Passage by Ed Feshbach and Mandy Green. Based on Feydeau. Directed by Neil Gargano with Louie Jordan, Lucie Carey, John Khalil, David Northrup, John Allen, Paul Ferrar and Betty Rorloff. Until August 16

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE

COMPANY (281226)

Playhouse. *Brother Joe* with music arranged by George John, director, Aarne Neeme. To Aug 2. *Clive Theatre. Redburn Fairy* by Alan Appleby. Directed, Aarne Neeme. Aug 8-21

JANE STREET THEATRE (682181)

The Drunk & S. Anky directed by John Clark, 1987. Ros Hume, with Vincent Gargie, Nick Lathams, Barry Otto, Barry Peltz, Doree Rukonena, Tim Burns, Les Melrose and John Hansen. Until August 21

KIRKILLI PUB THEATRE (521445)

Kirkilli Hotel. Milton's Feast

The Robin Hood Show by Perry Quanton and Paul Chubb. Directed by Perry Quanton, with Leonard Smith, Michael Ferguson and Ross Holman. Throughout August

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS

(158156)

Golden a programme of folk songs and sketches describing regional Australia. Directed and performed by Lynn Douglas and Tony Nettle. For infants, primary and secondary NSW country. Throughout August

Miki, *Jackie* fragments, rock music. Sydney metropolitan area. Throughout August

Rolling Paper Theatre production of *The Last Power* for infants and primary

Shim, *Cartoon* Hunter from August 11-16

Modern Man Theatre programme of classroom plays. Directed by Michael Portland. For infants, primary and secondary. Metropolitan area. Throughout August

Open Warrington Shaples and Styles. Programmes through the century and *A History of Theatre* for secondary schools. North West and North Coast from August 4

LIVING PLANE LUNCHEONE THEATRE (357126)

Am. Theatre. I wish Quay

Black. Night by Paul Abraham. Directed by Michael Marston-Evans from August 4

MARIAN STREET THEATRE

(491226)

Shed by Brian Clemens. Directed by Alan Duncan with Olive Rodd, Brian Wilson, Louise Park, Paul Mason, Michael Glen, Rikki McDonald. Until August 2

The Drunkenness by W Somerset Maugham. Directed by Bob Cabbage. Commences August 8

MUSIC HALL THEATRE

RESTAURANT (9991222)

Four Lines by Mrs Henry Wood. Directed by Alan Harvey, with Alan Harvey, Bernadette Houghton, Mal Carnahan and Christine Carrison. Throughout August

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (9771882)

4) *The Loft* a new musical review with The Toppens family and Laurie Diamond. Throughout August

NEW THEATRE (5191435)

We Can't Put It. We Won't Put It by Dana Fo. Directed by Jerome Levy. Throughout August

NIMROD THEATRE (6991004)

Upstart. 'Break the Mold by Louis Nowra. Directed by Neil Arnold, with Derek Sheering, Martin Vaughan and Judy Davis. Commences August 13

Downstart. 'Black & Blue by John Baldwin. Directed by Terence Clark, with Brian Brown, Michelle Fawcett, John McGregor, David Adams and Joan Sydney. Until August 31

Lat. Night Show. 'Shed by Barry Oakley, with Max Gilson. August 1-31

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF

(3571266)

The 'Shed' Journey for primary schools and *The Unborn World of Jasper Lee*. 100

for secondary schools; both directed by Ian Watson, with Aida Ceballos, David London, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rosemary Laura Mitzogubian area throughout August.

Q THEATRE (047 26 5254)

**Travelling North* by David Williamson. Bankstown and August 2.

The Assassination by Harold Pinter; commences French August 15.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (062 8555)

Event Theatre. *More Than A Sexual Assault* about the life and work of C.J. Dennis with John Derran. August 14-24.

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (088 7948)

Free drama workshops on weekend, includes playwriting, mime, dance, puppetry, design, radio and video. Shopfront Theatre touring city schools with *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare and *Children A and The Tale Play* created by the cast and directed by Errol Bray. Youth Theatre Showcase. Punks and Pats a music play, both created by Shopfront Theatre and directed by, Faye Winwood. August 1, 2, 8, 9, 15 & 16. Fourth National Young Playwrights workshop including season of plays by young Australian playwrights. August 28-31.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (20588)

Drama Theatre 50H.

Crimes de Beggars by Edmond Rostand translated by Louis Nowra, directed by Richard Whelan, with John Bell, Robin Ramsay, Helen Mene and Andrea McFarlane. Until August 30.

THEATRE ROYAL (221 6111)

Born in the Garden by Peter Nichols, with Green Plains and John Moffatt. Until August 9.

Flies in the Face of Our Song by Neil Simon, directed by Phil Cusack, with Jackie Weaver and John Waters. Commences August 21.

OPERA

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (20588)

Sydney Opera House.

Wagner by Verdi, conducted by Richard Beryage and produced by John Copley. *Antioch* by Janacek, conducted by Mark Elder and produced by David Pountney. *I Musicians* by Verdi, conducted by Richard Beryage and produced by Peter Benvenuto. *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini, conducted by Peter Seymour and produced by John Cusack. *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi, conducted by Richard Beryage and produced by John Copley. In repertory throughout August.

For entire season: Carole Long on 222 8570/8571/8572.

QLD THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (06 2944)

When The Jester Sings by Jon Derran, director and designer, Leon Hiddleston. Aug 7-9 Sept 11.

Children's Theatre. *Arlopholomelomelo* by Rene Watson, director, Erna Vandenberg. 14-Aug-9. Sept 29th.

HER MAJESTY'S (221 2172)

The Divorcemans and Delights Of Oscar Wilde starring Vincent Price. Aug 11-16.

Range And Breaker Aug 18-21 Sept 1st.

LA ROUTE THEATRE (16 1622)

**Yes! Just Again* by Rob George, director. Sept-March To Aug 18.

**Truman* by Stephen Sewell, director. Malcolm Blacklock. Aug 22-Sept 11.

POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE

Ring 36 1745 for current programme.

QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL (221 5603)

On tour. QAC's production of *Accommodation* by Nick Hall, director. Lloyd Nickson.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 5661)

SGSO Theatre. *Wandering Brains*. *Flowers* by Eugene O'Neill, director, Robin Lovejoy, designer Graham Mackean. Aug 8-21.

TOWNSVILLE ARTS THEATRE (16 1188)

An adaptation of *The Sevens Of Two Wives* by Goldoni, director Graham Byrne. 14-Aug-9.

TOWNSVILLE CIVIC THEATRE

Summerstock Production. **The Department* by David Williamson, director Rod Wooley. Aug 28-29.

DANCE

QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL (221 5603)

1221 5603.

State Tour. *Kalidasa*, Dance Company.

For entire contact: Pam Ann-John on 222 8571.

SA THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (212 5777)

53 Angus St. *Fable Mammals* by Alan Ayckbourn, director, Leo Hellerman. Aug 9-16.

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE (221 8640)

Script writing workshop for young writers, 16-18 years in Cardiac. Aug 16-17 Sept 8-11. Ring Edwin Bell on 222 8640 for details.

Q THEATRE (221 5631)

88 Haines St. *Cherish*. 4pm by Brandon Thomas, director Peter Lyons. Wed-Sat To Aug 21.

THE SPACE (51 0121)

A theatre group from Rotterdam. 348, presents a Greek classic *The Oresteia*. Aug 2. Best Seat. Aug 6-9.

STAGE COMPANY

Balcony Theatre 128 George St. *Amoral* by Harold Pinter, director Les Dayman. Aug 7-10.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY (16 5151)

Theatre 82. *Pericles* by William Shakespeare, director, Nick Knight, designer Robert Aug. 8 Sept 6.

Playhouse. **The Man From Macinagar* by Dorothy Hewson, director Kevin Palmer, designer Eamon O'Donnell. Aug 15-Sept 6.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY

Magpie TIE Team presents three plays. *Accommodation* from Until 24 Sept. 14-16 Mr. Thorne's Affairs. The Tell.

Metropolitan School performances. *Love of Broken Hill* and *Yours* Aug 17-20.

THEATRE GUILD (2422 5418)

Performances translated and directed by Professor Tom Common with the Italian Folk Ensemble. *Little Theatre* Wed-Sat Aug 16-21. Town Hall Theatre. Tues Aug 27-Sept 6.

THEATRE (21 6040)

At the Red Shed. **Braden Butterflies* by Debra Clark, director David Young. Aug-Sept.

DANCE

FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 0121)

The Australian Ballet presents Anna Kournikova. Aug 1, 2, 4. *Tristan & Isolde* works including *Silphids*, *Schubertiana*, and *Grochowski Ball*. Aug 5-9. The Australian Ballet the Dancers Company presents *Phaedra*, *Poll*, *Symphonies in D and F* and *Massenet*. The Dance Theatre of Harlem. Aug 11-16.

THE SPACE (51 0121)

The Australian Dance Theatre presents *At the Art*. Aug 29-30.

For entire season: Edwin Bell on 222 8570.

TAS

THEATRE

SALAMANCE THEATRE COMPANY (31 5299)

Forrest & Nurse by John Lurie, director.
Richard Davey, Rachel Mrl. Art Gallery
Aug 1-8 Hobart Museum and Art Gallery
Aug 11-29

Minerale and Max Frick, Laurence
schools Aug 1-8 Hobart schools Aug 11-29

Hobart Museum and Art Gallery, Sunday
Afternoon Show, Aug 17
THEATRE ROYAL (342266)

The Mystery starring Kate Winslet and
Dennis Quaid, Aug 12-16
Prozac presents *Money And Brakes*
Aug 26-30

For more contact Ann Campbell on
0615 67 4470

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (341 2621)

EQ2 Theatre Company presents *Look Up*
Your Daughter, director, Brian Girdley,
with Fred Parlow, Monica Maughan and
The Bards, From Aug 22

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING

GROUP (347 1113)

Buck Theatre, *"Banshee of Lyons"* by Jean
Pierre Mignot, Aug 21 - Sept 21
The Czar of Carlsberg, Mansfield
Campbell and edited by Kathy Howie, To
Aug 17

ARTSIA THEATRE (349 6673)

"The Whole - The Better Thing That Ever
Dead" by Geoff Kelso, for upper primary.
Where's Zorro? by Helen Morgan, for
junior primary

COMEDY CAFE

Brunswick Station, Future Original
Comedy entertainment starring Rod
Quarlock

COMEDY THEATRE (341 4890)

Drums And Delights, starring Vincent
Price, To Aug 9

"A Not A Two", with Robyn Archer, Aug
12-30

DRAMA RESOURCE CENTRE
(347 5648)

Touring, Victorian Youth Theatre
Association in conjunction with the
Drama Resource Centre presents, *Truth*
On, From Aug 10

FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (411 3272)

Missing Persons presents *Future*
AFR, *MAJESTY'S* (422 2629)
Arise To Aug 11
I A MAMA (489 6568)

Performance Events, *EG* by Chris Mann
Aug 1-4

A John Theatre, *Great Of The Future* by
Corno and Arthur Cantrell, Other events
include works by Don Dedman and Chris
Kewenow, Aug 8-10

THE LAYS LAUGH THEATRE
RESTAURANT (419 6233)

Arise To Aug 11, Aug 1-4

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
(454 4000)

Athenians: The Medonians by Thomson
Wilder, with Vivian Davis, Margot
Knight, Charles Longwell, John Stanton,
Kate Wilson, Peter Curran and Rose
Morgan, Aug 11-Sept 27

Men For Me: Get For You, To Aug 9
The March, by Jean Genet, Aug 18-Sept
26

"Men: Based by Ron Eliska, Aug 8-Oct 4
MURRAY RIVER PERFORMING

GROUP (317 613)

Albury Community workshops and
Circle workshops, Throughout Aug

MIL THEATRE COMPANY (322 1113)

Geelong, *"The Circle Company"*, A
theatrical exploration of circle symbolism
in the Geelong area by the Mil Theatre
Company, From Aug 12

PLAYBOX THEATRE FOUNDATION
(874 666)

Dunstan, *Haves* by Arthur Kopit,
director, Malcolm Robertson, with
Patricia Kennedy, From Aug 18
Ugliest, Most Child by Sam Shepard,
director, Roger Palmer, From Aug 14

WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE
(133 7014)

The Players written and performed by Ian
Schroeder and Phil Sumner, director, Ray
Murray, Throughout Aug
Living On The Edge, a cabaret show,
Mother Anne's, and *GG*

OPERA

ARTS LOUNGE OF VICTORIA
(329 4335)

Touring, Victorian State Opera presents
Pinkie Dicks, From and *Requiem*

Mixed Company presents *Angels, Ladies*
For more contact Suzanne Springer on
387 3631

WA

THEATRE

HAYMAN THEATRE (150 3026)

Diary Of The Year by David Pinner,
director, Ross Munro

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (422 2629)

The Diary, Gail director, Ron Campbell,
Duke

The Longest by William Douglas
Home, with George Withers, John
McCallum and Ronald Fraser, To Aug 2

THE HOLE IN THE WALL (261 2471)

A Has The Last by Emphatic Kahoon,
director, Edgar Metcalfe, To Aug 21

Sometime, Jonathan by John Arden,
director, Mike Morris, Aug 21-Aug 6

THE MAGIC MIRROR THEATRE
COMPANY

The Ashes by John Ash, by John
Arden, director, John Arden

PLAYHOUSE (123 3380)

The National Theatre Company, *Angels*
Angels by Jason Lindsay, director,
Murray McNaughton, with Nina Pennell,
Aug 21-Aug 11

"MADOFFYAN MURRAY BY
RICHARD TULLOCH

"MURRAY BY" by Richard Tullloch
"MURRAY BY" by Richard Tullloch

"MURRAY BY" by Richard Tullloch
"MURRAY BY" by Richard Tullloch

REGAL THEATRE (361 537)

Private Lives by Noel Coward, with
Edward Woodward and Michelle Dore,
Aug 26-Sept 30

THE UNIVERSITY THEATRES
(361 2440)

Geogon: A Not A Two by Robyn Archer
and Rodney Fisher, director, Rodney
Fisher, with Robyn Archer, To Aug 9

Garth Hewitt Presents, Aug 10-12
Drums and Delights of Our Halls
with Vincent Price, Aug 1-25

DANCE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (422 2629)

Australian Ballet, Programme to be
announced, Open Aug 19

THE UNIVERSITY THEATRES
(361 2440)

Dolphin Theatre, *Ballet Cleveland*, Artistic
director, Tamara De Niro, Aug 9, 24

WA RAILLET COMPANY

Geogon Theatre, *The Ballet*, To Aug
16

In residence programmes, at University, Aug
25-30

OPERA

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (422 2629)

Opera, To Aug 7-16

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Across

1. Blossom? She might help with the washing-up (6-11)
2. Lovers' tangled sheets? (3)
3. He sets up a river that returns to follow in a model (10)
4. Passed through international water (6)
5. She's put the polio on one side (10)
6. Satisfiers, who, that is to experiment with the drug (10)
7. Refrains a turn in the value (11)

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18. Do not much about the domestic (11)
19. Where softly at the best of them (10)
20. True but never to be able out of (10)
21. National points to an origin with location (11)
22. I rushed around one in Infidelity (10)
23. "On account —" (10) (10) (11)
24. In native woodlands (11)

Down

1. Admitted to producing an explanation of
game by Forward (10)
2. A reader goes forward more than starts (11)
3. Bounded forward's not who was in the
vanguard (10)
4. Make friends or behave nicely (10)
5. Miss not focused at one speaker (11)
6. Unsurprisingly buy a grand word in the
border town (10)
7. Secret, he was proud of those two eyes.
Which — sparkle in their stars? (10)
8. Wave to the doctor and move at the military
march (10)
9. Might use more professor (11)
10. Suggested at policy, before Wargate (11)
11. Drive to the top of the West 4, country, we
hear (11)
12. A hard-headed is a, a, a, a (11)
13. For example, not out and shut (10)
14. Rules will show up and even more guarded
(11)

The winner of last
month's crossword was
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